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STEVENSON

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ALLAHABAD

# A COLLEGE STEVENSON

*Edited by*

P. E. DUSTOOR, D. LITT.,

*on behalf of*

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R. L. S.

I

SIR EDMUND GOSSE

Pen in hand, I pause to think how I can render in words a faint impression of the most inspiring, the most fascinating human being that I have known.

It is nearly a quarter of a century since I first saw Stevenson. In the autumn of 1870, in company with a former school fellow, I was in the Hebrides. We had been wandering in the Long Island, as they name the outer archipelago, and our steamer, returning, called at Skye. At the pier of Portree, I think, a company came on board—'people of importance in their day,' Edinburgh acquaintances, I suppose, who had accidentally met in Skye on various errands. At all events, they invaded our modest vessel with a loud sound of talk. Professor Blackie was among them, a famous figure that calls for no description; and a voluble, shaggy man, clad in homespun, with spectacles forward upon nose, who, it was whispered to us, was Mr. Sam Bough, the Scottish Academician, a water colour painter of some repute, who was to die in 1878. There were also several engineers of prominence. At the tail of this chatty, jesting little crowd of in-

vaders came a youth of about my own age, whose appearance, for some mysterious reason, instantly attracted me. He was tall, preternaturally lean, with longish hair and as restless and questing as a spaniel. The party from Portree fairly took possession of us; at meals they crowded around the captain, and we common tourists sat silent, below the salt. The stories of Blackie and Sam Bough were resonant. Meanwhile, I knew not why, I watched the plain, pale lad who took the lowest place in this privileged company.

The summer of 1870 remains in the memory of western Scotland as one of incomparable splendour. Our voyage, especially as evening drew on, was like an emperor's progress. We stayed on deck till the latest moment possible, and I occasionally watched the lean youth, busy and serviceable with some of the little tricks with which we were later on to grow familiar—the advance with hand on hip, the side-wise bending of the head to listen. Meanwhile darkness overtook us, a wonderful halo of moonlight swam up over Glenelg, the indigo of the peaks of the Cuchullins faded into the general blue night. I went below, but was presently aware of some change of course, and then of an unexpected stoppage. I tore on deck, and found that we had left our track among the islands, and had steamed up a narrow and unvisited fiord of the mainland—I think Loch Nevis. The sight was curious and bewildering. We lay in a gorge of blackness, with only a strip of the blue moonlit sky overhead; in

the dark a few lanterns jumped about the shore, carried by agitated but unseen and soundless persons. As I leaned over the bulwarks, Stevenson was on my side, and he explained to me that we had come up this loch to take away to Glasgow a large party of emigrants driven from their homes in the interests of a deer-forest. As he spoke, a black mass became visible entering the vessel. Then as we slipped off shore, the fact of their hopeless exile came home to these poor fugitives, and suddenly, through the absolute silence, there arose from them a wild keening and wailing reverberated by the cliffs of the loch, and at that strange place and hour infinitely poignant. When I came back on deck next morning, my unnamed friend was gone. He had put off with the engineers to visit some remote lighthouse of the Hebrides.

This early glimpse of Stevenson is a delightful memory to me. When we met next, not only did I instantly recall him, but, what was stranger, he remembered me. This voyage in the *Clansman* was often mentioned between us, and it has received for me a sort of consecration from the fact that in the very last letter that Louis wrote, finished on the day of his death, he made a reference to it.

In the very touching "Recollections" which our friend Mr. Andrew Lang has published, he says: 'I shall not deny that my first impression (of Stevenson) was not wholly favourable.' I remember, too, that John Addington Symonds was not

pleased at first. It only shows how different are our moods. I must confess that in my case the invading army simply walked up and took the fort by storm. It was in 1877, or late in 1876, that I was presented to Stevenson, at the old Savile Club, by Mr. Sidney Colvin, who thereupon left us to our devices. We went downstairs and lunched together, and then we adjourned to the smoking room. As twilight came on I tore myself away, but Stevenson walked with me across Hyde Park, and nearly to my house. He had an engagement, and so had I, but I walked a mile or two back with him. The fountains of talk had been unsealed, and they drowned the conventions. I came home dazzled with my new friend, saying, as Constance does of Arthur, 'Was ever such a gracious creature born?' That impression of ineffable mental charm was formed at the first moment of acquaintance, and it never lessened or became modified. Stevenson's rapidity in the sympathetic interchange of ideas was, doubtless, the source of it. He has been described as an 'egotist', but I challenge the description. If ever there was an altruist, it was Louis Stevenson; he seemed to feign an interest in himself merely to stimulate you to be liberal in your confidences.

Those who have written about him from later impressions than those of which I speak seem to me to give insufficient prominence to the gaiety of Stevenson. It was his cardinal quality in those early days. A childlike mirth leaped and danced in him; he seemed to skip upon the hills of life. He was

simply bubbling with quips and jests; his inherent earnestness or passion about abstract things was incessantly relieved by jocosity; and when he had built one of his intellectual castles in the sand, a wave of humour was certain to sweep it and destroy it. I cannot, for the life of me, recall any of his jokes; and written down in cold blood, they might not be funny if I did. They were not wit so much as humanity, the many-sided outlook upon life. I am anxious that his laughter-loving mood should not be forgotten, because later on it was partly, but I think never wholly, quenched by ill-health, responsibility, and the advance of years. He was often in the old days, excessively and delightfully silly—silly with the silliness of an inspired schoolboy; and I am afraid that our laughter sometimes sounded ill in the ears of age.

A pathos was given to his gaiety by the fragility of his health. He was never well, all the years I knew him; and we looked upon his life as hanging by the frailest tenure. As he never complained or maundered, this, no doubt—though we were not aware of it—added to the charm of his presence. He was so bright and keen and witty and any week he might die. No one, certainly, conceived it possible that he could reach his forty-fifth year. In 1879 his health visibly began to run lower, and he used to bury himself in lonely Scotch and French places, 'tinkering himself with solitude,' as he used to say.

My experience of Stevenson during these first years was confined to London, upon which he would

make sudden piratical descents, staying a few days or weeks, and melting into air again. He was much at my house; and it must be told that my wife and I, as young married people, had possessed ourselves of a house too large for our slender means immediately to furnish. The one person who thoroughly approved of our great, bare, absurd drawing-room was Louis, who very earnestly dealt with us on the immorality of chairs and tables, and desired us to sit always, as he delighted to sit, upon hassocks on the floor. Nevertheless, as arm-chairs and settees struggled into existence, he handsomely consented to use them, although never in the usual way, but with his legs thrown sideways over the arms of them, or the head of the sofa treated a perch. In particular, a certain shelf, with cupboards below, attached to a bookcase, is worn with the person of Stevenson, who would spend half an evening, while passionately discussing some great question of morality or literature, leaping sideways in a seated posture to the length of this shelf, and then back again. He was eminently peripatetic, too, and never better company than walking in the street, this exercise seeming to inflame his fancy. But his most habitual dwelling place in the London of those days was the Savile Club, then lodged in an inconvenient but very friendly house in Savile Row. Louis pervaded the club; he was its most affable and chatty member; and he lifted it, by the ingenuity of his incessant dialectic, to the level of a sort of humorous Academe or Mouscion.

At this time he must not be thought of as a successful author. A very few of us were convinced of his genius; but with the exception of Mr. Leslie Stephen, nobody of editorial status was sure of it. I remember the publication of *An Inland Voyage* in 1878, and the inability of the critics and the public to see anything unusual in it.

Stevenson was not without a good deal of innocent oddity in his dress. When I try to conjure up his figure, I can see only a slight, lean lad, in a suit of blue sea-cloth, a black shirt and a wisp of yellow carpet that did duty for a necktie. This was long his attire, persevered in to the anguish of his more conventional acquaintances. I have a ludicrous memory of going, in 1878, to buy him a new hat, in company with Mr. Lang, the thing then upon his head having lost the semblance of a human article of dress. Aided by a very civil shopman, we suggested several hats and caps, and Louis at first seemed interested; but having presently hit upon one which appeared to us pleasing and decorous, we turned for a moment to enquire the price. We turned back, and found that Louis had fled, the idea of parting with the shapeless object having proved too painful to be entertained. By the way, Mr. Lang will pardon me if I tell, in exacter detail, a story of his. It was immediately after the adventure with the hat that, not having quite enough money to take him from London to Edinburgh, third class, he proposed to the railway clerk to throw in a copy of Mr. Swinburne's *Queen Mother and Rosamond*. The

offer was refused with scorn, although the book was of the first edition and even then worth more than the cost of a whole ticket.

Stevenson's pity was a very marked quality, and it extended to beggars, which is, I think, to go too far. His optimism, however, suffered a rude shock in South Audley Street one summer afternoon. We met a stalwart beggar, whom I refused to aid. Louis, however, wavered and finally handed him sixpence. The man pocketed the coin, forbore to thank his benefactor, but, fixing his eye on me, said in a loud voice—'And what is the other little gentleman going to give me?' 'In future,' said Louis, as we strode coldly on, 'I shall be the "other little gentleman".'

In those early days he suffered many indignities on account of his extreme youthfulness of appearance and absence of self-assertion. He was at Inverness—being five or six and twenty at the time—and had taken a room in a hotel. Coming back about dinner time, he asked the hour of *table d'hôte*, whereupon the landlady said in a motherly way: 'Oh, I knew you wouldn't like to sit in there among the grown up people, so I've had a place put for you in the bar.' There was a frolic at the Royal Hotel, Bathgate, in the summer of 1879. Louis was lunching alone, and the maid, considering him a negligible quantity, came and leaned out of the window. This outrage on the proprieties was so stinging that Louis at length, made free to ask her, with irony, what she was doing there. 'I'm

looking for my lad,' she replied. 'Is that he?' asked Stevenson, with keener sarcasm, 'Weel, I've been lookin' for him a' my life, and I've never seen him yet,' was the response. Louis was disarmed at once and wrote her on the spot some beautiful verses in the vernacular. 'They're no bad for a beginner,' she was kind enough to say when she had read them.

The year 1879 was a dark one in the life of Louis. He had formed a conviction that it was his duty to go out to the extreme west of the United States, while his family and the inner circle of his friends were equally certain that it was neither needful nor expedient that he should make this journey. As it turned out, they were wrong, and he was right; but in the circumstances their opinion seemed the only correct one. His health was particularly bad, and he was ordered, not west, but south. The expedition, which he has partly described in *The Amateur Emigrant* and *Across the Plains*, was taken, therefore, in violent opposition to all those whom he left in England and Scotland, and this accounts for the mode in which it was taken. He did not choose to ask for money to be spent in going to California, and it was hoped that the withdrawal of supplies would make the voyage impossible. But Louis, bringing to the front a streak of iron obstinacy which lay hidden somewhere in his gentle nature, scraped together enough to secure him a steerage passage across the Atlantic.

The day before he started he spent with my

wife and me—a day of stormy agitation, an April day of rain-clouds and sunshine; for it was not in Louis to remain long in any mood. I seem to see him now, pacing the room, a cigarette spinning in his wasted fingers. To the last we were trying to dissuade him from what seemed to us the maddest of enterprises. He was so ill that I did not like to leave him, and at night—it was mid-summer weather—we walked down into town together. We were by this time, I suppose, in a pretty hysterical state of mind, and as we went through Berkeley Square, in mournful discussion of the future, Louis suddenly proposed that we should visit the so-called 'Haunted House,' which then occupied the newspapers. The Square was quiet in the decency of a Sunday evening. We found the house and one of us boldly knocked at the door. There was no answer and no sound, and we jeered upon the doorstep; but suddenly we were both aware of a pale face—a phantasm in the dusk—gazing down upon us from a surprising height. It was the care-taker, I suppose, mounted upon a flight of steps; but terror gripped us at the heart, and we fled with footsteps as precipitate as those of schoolboys caught in an orchard. I think that ghostly face in Berkeley Square must have been Louis's latest European impression for many months.

All the world now knows, through the two books which I have named, what immediately happened. Presently letters began to arrive, and in

one from Monterey, written early in October, 1879, he told me of what was probably the nearest approach of death that ever came until the end, fifteen years later. I do not think it is generally known even in the inner circle of his friends, that in September of that year he was violently ill, alone, at an Angora-goat ranch in the Santa Lucia Mountains. 'I scarcely slept or ate or thought for four days,' he said. 'Two nights I lay out under a tree, in a sort of stupor doing nothing but fetch water for myself and horse, light a fire and make coffee, and all night awake hearing the goat bells ringing and the tree-toads singing, when each new noise was enough to set me mad.' Then an old frontiersman, a mighty hunter of bears, came round, and tenderly nursed him through his attack. 'By all rules this should have been my death, but after a while my spirit got up again in a divine frenzy, and has since kicked and spurred my vile body forward with great emphasis and success.'

Late in the winter of 1879, with renewed happiness and calm of life, and also under the spur of a need of money, he wrote with much assiduity. Among other things, he composed at Monterey the earliest of his novels, a book called *A Vendetta in the West*, the manuscript of which seems to have disappeared. Perhaps we need not regret it; for so he declared to me, 'It was about as bad as Ouida, but not quite, for it was not so eloquent.' He had made a great mystery of his whereabouts; indeed for several months no one was to know what had

become of him and his letters were to be considered secret. At length, in writing from Monterey, on 15 November 1870, he removed the embargo: 'That I am in California may now be published to the brethren.' In the summer of the next year, after a winter of very serious ill health, during which more than once he seemed on the brink of a galloping consumption, he returned to England. He had married in California a charming lady whom we all soon learned to regard as the most appropriate and helpful companion that Louis could possibly have secured. On 8 October 1880—a memorable day—he made his first appearance in London since his American exile. A postcard from Edinburgh had summoned me to 'appoint with an appointment' certain particular friends, 'and let us once again,' Louis wrote, 'lunch together in the Savile Halls.' Mr. Lang and Mr. Walter Polloch, and, I think, Mr. Henley graced the occasion, and the club cellar produced a bottle of Chambertin of quite uncommon merit. Louis, I may explain, had a peculiar passion for Burgundy, which he esteemed the wine of highest possibilities in the whole Bacchic order; and I have often known him descant on a Pommard or a Montrachet in terms so exquisite that the listeners could scarcely taste the wine itself.

Davos-Platz was now prescribed for the rickety lungs; and late in that year Louis and his wife took up abode there, at the Hotel Buol, he carrying with him a note from me recommending him to the care of John Addington Symonds. Not at first, but pre-

sently and on the whole, these two men, so singular in their generation, so unique and so unlike, 'hit it off,' as people say, and were an intellectual solace to each other; but their real friendship did not begin till a year later. I remember Stevenson saying to me next spring that to be much with Symonds was to 'adventure in a thornwood.' It was at Davos, this winter of 1880, that Stevenson took up the study of Hazlitt, having found a publisher who was willing to bring out a critical and biographical memoir. This scheme occupied a great part of Louis's attention, but was eventually dropped; for the further he progressed in the investigation of Hazlitt's character the less he liked it and the squalid *Liber Amoris* gave the *coup de grace*. He did not know what he would be at. His vocation was not yet apparent to him. He talked of writing on craniology and the botany of the Alps. The unwritten books of Stevenson will one day attract the scholiast, who will endeavour, perhaps, to reconstruct them from the references to them in his correspondence. It may, therefore, be permissible to record here that he was long proposing to write a life of the Duke of Wellington, for which he made some considerable collections. This was even advertised as 'in preparation,' on several occasions, from 1885 until 1887, but was ultimately abandoned. I remember his telling me that he intended to give emphasis to the 'humour' of Wellington.

In June 1881 we saw him again; but he passed very rapidly through London to a cottage at Pitlo-

chry in Perthshire. He had lost his hold on town. 'London,' he wrote me, 'now chiefly means to me Colvin and Henley, Leslie Stephen and you.' He was now coursing a fresh literary hare, and set Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Saintsbury, and me busily hunting out facts about Jean Cavalier, the romantic eighteenth-century adventurer whose life he fancied that he would write. His thoughts had recurred, in fact, to Scottish history; and he suddenly determined to do what seemed rather a mad thing—namely to stand for the Edinburgh Professorship of History, then just vacant. We were all whipped up for testimonials, and a little pamphlet exists, in a pearl-grey cover—the despair of bibliophiles—in which he and a strange assortment of his friends set forth his claims. These required nimble treatment, since, to put it plainly, it was impossible to say that he had any. His appeal was treated by the advocates, who were the electing body, with scant consideration, and some worthy gentleman was elected. The round Louis was well out of such a square hole as a chair in a university.

But something better was at hand. It was now, and in the peace of the Highlands, that Louis set out to become a popular writer. The fine art of 'booming' had not then been introduced, nor the race of those who week by week discover coveys of fresh geniuses. Although Stevenson, in a sporadic way, had written much that was delightful and that will last, he was yet—now at the close of his thirtyfirst year—by no means successful. The income that he

made by his pen was still ridiculously small; and Mr. John Morley, amazing as it sounds today, had just refused to give him a book to write in the English Men of Letters series, on the ground of his obscurity as an author. All this was to be changed, and the book that was to do it was even now upon the stocks. In August the Stevensons moved to a house in Braemar—a place, as Louis said, 'patronized by the royalty of the Sister Kingdoms—Victoria and Cairngorms, sir, honouring that countryside by their conjunct presence.' The house, as Louis was careful to instruct me, was entitled 'The Cottage, late the late Miss McGregor's Castleton of Braemar'; and thus I obediently addressed my letters until Louis remarked that 'the reference to a deceased Highland lady, tending as it does to foster unavailing sorrow, may be with advantage omitted from the address.'

To the Cottage, therefore, heedless of the manes of the late Miss McGregor, I proceeded in the most violent storm of hail and rain that even Aberdeenshire can produce in August, and found Louis as frail as a ghost, indeed, but better than I expected. He had adopted a trick of stretching his thin limbs over the back of a wicker sofa, which gave him an extraordinary resemblance to that quaint insect, the praying mantis; but it was a mercy to find him out of bed at all. Among the many attractions of the Cottage, the presence of Mr. Thomas Stevenson—Louis's father—must not be omitted. He was then a singularly charming and vigorous personality, indignantly hovering at the borders of old age ('Sixty-

three, sir, this year; and deuce take it! am I to be called "an old gentleman" by a cab-driver in the streets of Aberdeen?") and to my gratitude and delight, my companion in long morning walks. The detestable weather presently brought all the other members of the household to their beds, and Louis in particular became a wreck. However, it was a wreck that floated every day at nightfall; for at the worst he was able to come downstairs to dinner and spend the evening with us.

We passed the days with regularity. After breakfast I went to Louis's bedroom, where he sat up in a bed with dark, flashing eyes and ruffled hair, and we played chess on the coverlet. Not a word passed, for he was strictly forbidden to speak in the early part of the day. As soon as he felt tired—often in the middle of a game—he would rap with peremptory knuckles on the board as a signal to stop, and then Mrs. Stevenson or I would arrange his writing materials on the bed. Then I would see no more of him till dinner-time, when he would appear, smiling and voluble, the horrid bar of speechlessness having been let down. Then every night, after dinner, he would read us what he had written during the day. I find in a note to my wife dated 3 September 1881: 'Louis has been writing, all the time I have been here, a novel of pirates and hidden treasure, in the highest degree exciting. He reads it to us every night, chapter by chapter.' This, of course, was *Treasure Island*, about the composition of which, long afterwards, in Samoa, he wrote an

account in some parts of which I think that his memory played him false. I look back to no keener intellectual pleasure than those cold nights at Braemar, with the sleet howling outside, and Louis reading his budding romance by the lamplight, emphasizing the purpler passages with lifted voice and gesticulating finger.

Hardly had I left the Cottage than the harsh and damp climate of Aberdeenshire was felt to be rapidly destroying Louis, and he and his wife fled to Davos. Before the end of October they were ensconced there in a fairly comfortable chalet. Here Louis and his step-son amused themselves by setting up a handpress, which Mr. Osbourne worked, and for which Louis provided the literary material. Four or five laborious little publications were put forth, some of them illustrated by the daring hand of Stevenson himself. He complained to me that Mr. Osbourne was a very ungenerous publisher—'one penny a cut, and one half-penny a set of verses! What do you say to that for Grub Street?' These little diversions were brought to a close by the printer-publisher breaking, at one fell swoop, the press and his own finger. The little Davos press issues now fetch extravagant prices, which would have filled author and printer with amazement. About this time Louis and I had a good deal of correspondence about a work which he had proposed that we should undertake in collaboration—a re-telling, in choice literary form, of the most picture-

sque murder cases of the last hundred years. We were to visit the scenes of these crimes and turn over the evidence. The great thing, Louis said, was not to begin to write until we were thoroughly alarmed. 'These things must be done, my boy, under the very shudder of the goose-flesh.' We were to begin with the 'Story of the Red Bard,' which indeed is a tale preeminently worthy to be re-told by Stevenson. But the scheme never came off, and is another of the dead leaves in his Vallombrosa.

We saw him in London again, for a few days, in October 1882, but this was a melancholy period. For eight months at the close of that year and the beginning of 1883 he was capable of no mental exertion. He was in the depths of languor, and in nightly apprehension of a fresh attack. He slept excessively and gave humorous accounts of the drowsiness that hung upon him, addressing his notes 'from the Arms of Porpus' (Morpheus) and 'at the Sign of the Poppy.' No climate seemed to relieve him, and so, in the autumn of 1882, a bold experiment was tried. As the snows of Davos were of no avail, the hot, damp airs of Hyères should be essayed. I am inclined to dwell in some fullness on the year he spent at Hyères, because, curiously enough, it was not so much as mentioned, to my knowledge, by any of the writers of obituary notices at Stevenson's death. It takes, nevertheless, a prominent place in his life's history, for his removal thither marked a sudden and brilliant, though only temporary, revival in his health and spirits. Some of his

best work, too,' was written at Hyères, and one might say that fame first found him in this warm corner of southern France.

The house at Hyères was called 'La Solitude.' It stood in a paradise of roses and aloes, fig-marigolds, and olives. It had delectable and even, so Louis declared, 'sub-celestial' views over a plain bounded by 'certain mountains as graceful as Apollo, as severe as Zeus,' and at first the hot mistral, which blew and burned where it blew, seemed the only drawback. Not a few of the best poems in the *Underwoods* reflect the ecstasy of convalescence under the skies and perfumes of 'La Solitude.' By the summer Louis could report 'good health of a radiant order.' It was while he was at Hyères that Stevenson first directly addressed an American audience, and I may record that, in September 1883, he told me to 'beg Gilder your prettiest for a gentleman in pecuniary sloughs.' Mr. Gilder was quite alive to the importance of securing such a contributor, although when the Amateur Emigrant had entered the office of the *Century Magazine* in 1879 he had been very civilly but coldly shown the door. (I must be allowed to tease my good friends in Union Square by recording that fact!) Mr. Gilder asked for fiction, but received instead *The Silverado Squatters*, which duly appeared in the magazine.

It was also arranged that Stevenson should make an ascent of the Rhone for *The Century*, and Mr. Joseph Pennell was to accompany him to make sketches for the magazine. But Stevenson's health failed

again; the sudden death of a very dear old friend was a painful shock to him, and the winter of that year was not propitious. Abruptly, however, in January 1884, another crisis came. He went to Nice, where he was thought to be dying. He saw no letters; all his business was kindly taken charge of by Mr. Henley; and again for a long time, he passed beneath the penumbra of steady languor and infirmity. When it is known how constantly he suffered, how brief and flickering were the intervals of comparative health, it cannot but add to the impression of his radiant fortitude through all these trials, and of his persistent employment of all lucid moments. It was pitiful, and yet at the same time very inspiring, to see a creature so feeble and so ill equipped for the struggle bear himself so smilingly and so manfully through all his afflictions. There can be no doubt, however, that this latest breakdown vitally affected his spirits. He was never, after this, quite the gay child of genius that he had previously been. Something of a graver cast became natural to his thoughts; he had seen Death in the cave. And now for the first time he traced a new note in his writings—the note of ‘Pulvis et Umbra.’

After 1883 my personal memories of Stevenson become very casual. In November 1884, he was settled at Bournemouth, in a villa called ‘Bonaltie Towers,’ and there he stayed until, in March, 1885, he took a house of his own, which in pious memory of his grandfather, he named ‘Skerryvore.’ In the preceding winter, when I was going to America to

lecture, he was particularly anxious that I should lay at the feet of Mr. Frank R. Stockton his homage, couched in the following lines:

My Stockton if I failed to like,  
It were a sheer depravity;  
For I went down with the 'Thomas Hyke,'  
And up with the 'Negative Gravity.'

He adored these tales of Mr. Stockton's, a taste which must be shared by all good men. To my constant sorrow, I was never able to go to Bournemouth during the years he lived there. It has been described to me, by those who are more fortunate, as a pleasure that was apt to tantalize and evade the visitor, so constantly was the invalid unable, at the last, to see the friend who had travelled a hundred miles to speak with him. It was, therefore, during his visits to London, infrequent as these were, that we saw him at his best, for these were made at moments of unusual recovery. He generally lodged at what he called the 'Monument,' this being his title for Mr. Colvin's house, a wing of the vast structure of the British Museum. I recall an occasion on which Louis dined with us (March, 1886), because of the startling interest in the art of strategy which he had developed—an interest which delayed the meal with arrangements of serried bottles counter-scarped and lines of cruets drawn up on horseback ready to charge. So infectious was his enthusiasm that we forgot our hunger, and hung over the embattled tablecloth, easily persuaded to agree with

him that neither poetry nor the plastic arts could compete for a moment with 'the finished conduct, sir, of a large body of men in face of the enemy.'

It was a little later that he took up the practice of modelling clay figures as he sat up in bed. Some of these compositions—which needed, perhaps, his eloquent commentary to convey their full effect to the spectator—were not without a measure of skill of design. I recollect his saying with extreme gravity, 'I am in sculpture what Mr. Watts is in painting. We were both of us pre-occupied with moral and abstract ideas.' I wonder whether anyone has preserved specimens of these allegorical groups of clay.

The last time I had the happiness of seeing Stevenson was on Sunday, 21 August 1887. He had been brought up from Bournemouth the day before in a wretched condition of health, and was lodged in a private hotel in Finsbury Circus, in the City, ready to be easily moved to a steamer in the Thames on the morrow. I was warned, in a note, of his passage through town, and of the uncertainty whether he could be seen. On the chance, I went over early on the 21st, and, very happily for me, he had had a fair night, and could see me for an hour or two. No one else but Mrs. Stevenson was with him. His position was one which might have daunted any man's spirit: doomed to exile, in miserable health, starting vaguely across the Atlantic, with all his domestic interests rooted up, and with no notion where, or if at all, they should be replanted. If ever a man of imagination could be excused for

repining, it was now.

But Louis showed no white feather. He was radiantly humorous and romantic. It was church time, and there was some talk of my witnessing his will, which I could not do, because there could be found no other reputable witness, the whole crew of the hotel being at church. This set Louis off on a splendid dream of romance. 'This,' he said, 'is the way in which our valuable city hotels—packed, doubtless, with rich objects of jewellery—are deserted on a Sunday morning. Some bold piratical fellow, defying the spirit of Sabbatarianism, might make a handsome revenue by sacking the derelict hotels between the hours of ten and twelve. One hotel a week would suffice to enable such a man to retire into private life within the space of a year. A mask might, perhaps, be worn for the mere fancy of the thing, and to terrify kitchen-maids, but no real disguise would be needful to an enterprise that would require nothing but a brave heart and careful study of the City Postal Directory.' He spoke of the matter with so much fire and gallantry that I blushed for the youth of England and its lack of manly enterprise. No one ever could describe preposterous conduct with such a convincing air as Louis could. Common sense was positively humble in his presence.

The volume of his poems called *Underwoods* had just appeared and he inscribed a copy of it to me in the words 'at Todgers; as ever was, Chez Todgers, Pecksniff Street.' The only new book he seemed to wish to carry away with him was Mr.

Hardy's beautiful romance, *The Woodlanders*, which we had to scour London that Sunday afternoon to get hold of. In the evening Mr. Colvin and I each returned to 'Todgers' with the three volumes borrowed or stolen somewhere and wrapped up for the voyage next day. And so the following morning in an extraordinary vessel called the *Ludgate Hill*—as though in compliment to Mr. Stockton's genius—and carrying, besides the Stevensons, a cargo of stallions and monkeys, Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson and Mr. Lloyd Osbourne steamed down the Thames in search of health across the Atlantic and Pacific. The horses, Louis declared, protruded their noses in an unmannerly way between the passengers at dinner, and the poor little grey monkeys, giving up life for a bad job on board that strange, heaving cage, died by dozens, and were flung contemptuously out into the ocean. The strangest voyage, however, some time comes to an end, and Louis landed in America. He was never to cross the Atlantic again; and for those who loved him in Europe he had already journeyed more than half-way to another world.

It is impossible to deal, however, lightly with the personal qualities of Robert Louis Stevenson without dwelling on the extreme beauty of his character. In looking back over the twenty years in which I knew him, I feel that, since he was eminently human, I ought to recall his faults, but I protest that I can remember none. Perhaps the nearest approach to a fault was a certain want of discretion,

always founded on a wish to make people understand each other, but not exactly according to wisdom. I recollect that he once embroiled me for a moment with John Addington Symonds in a manner altogether blood-thirsty and ridiculous, so that we both fell upon him and rended him. This little weakness is really the blackest crime I can lay to his charge. And on the other side, what courage, what love, what an indomitable spirit, what a melting pity! He had none of the sordid errors of the little man who writes—no sick ambition, no envy of others, no exaggeration of the value of this ephemeral trick of scribbling. He was eager to help his fellows, ready to take a second place, with great difficulty offended, by the least show of repentance perfectly appeased.

Quite early in his career he adjusted himself to the inevitable sense of physical failure. He threw away from him all the useless impediments: he sat loosely in the saddle of life. Many men who get such a warning as he got take up something to lean against; according to their education or temperament, they support their maimed existence on religion, or on cynical indifference, or on some mania of the collector or the dilettante. Stevenson did none of these things. He determined to make the sanest and most genial use of so much of life as was left him. As anyone who reads his books can see, he had a deep strain of natural religion; but he kept it to himself; he made no hysterical or ostentatious use of it.

Looking back at the past, one recalls a trait that

had its significance, though one missed its meaning then. He was careful, as I have hardly known any other man to be, not to allow himself to be burdened by the weight of material things. It was quite a jest with us that he never acquired any possessions. In the midst of those who produced books, pictures, prints, bric-a-brac, none of these things ever stuck to Stevenson. There are some deep-sea creatures, the early part of whose life is spent dancing through the waters; at length some sucker or tentacle touches a rock, adheres, pulls down more tentacles, until the creature is caught there, stationary for the remainder of its existence. So it happens to men, and Stevenson's friends one after another caught the ground with a house, a fixed employment, a 'stake in life'; he alone kept dancing in the free element, unattached. I remember his saying to me that if ever he had a garden he should like it to be empty, just a space to walk and talk in, with no flowers to need a gardener nor fine lawns that had to be mown. Just a fragment of a bare world to move in, that was all Stevenson asked for. And we who gathered possessions around us—a little library of rare books, a little gallery of drawings or bronzes—he mocked us with his goblin laughter; it was only so much more luggage to carry on the march, he said, so much more to strain the arms and bend the back.

Stevenson thought, as we all must think, that literature is a delightful profession, a primrose path. I remember his once saying so to me, and then he turned, with the brimming look in his lustrous eyes

and the tremulous smile on his lips, and added, 'But it is not all primroses. Some of it is brambly, and most of it uphill.' He knew—no one better—how the hill catches the breath and how the brambles tear the face and hands; but he pushed strenuously, serenely on, searching for new paths, struggling to get up into the light and air.

One reason why it was difficult to be certain that Stevenson had reached his utmost in any direction was what I will call, for want of a better phrase, the energetic modesty of his nature. He was never satisfied with himself, yet never cast down. There are two dangers that beset the artist, the one is being pleased with what he has done, and the other being dejected with it. Stevenson, more than any other man whom I have known, steered the middle course. He never conceived that he had achieved a great success, but he never lost hope that by taking pains he might yet do so. Twelve years ago when he was beginning to write that curious and fascinating book, *Prince Otto*, he wrote to me describing the mood in which one should go about one's work—golden words, which I have never forgotten. 'One should strain,' he said, 'and then play, strain again and play again. The strain is for us, it educates; the play is for the reader, and pleases. In moments of effort one learns to do the easy things that people like.'

He learned that which he desired, and he gained more than he hoped for. He became the most exquisite English writer of his generation; yet those who lived close to him are apt to think less of this

than of the fact that he was the most unselfish and the most lovable of human beings.

## 2

## SIR GRAHAM BALFOUR

A generation has passed since the death of Stevenson: nearly all the survivors who knew him intimately are old or elderly people. If any further records of him in his habit as he lived are to be snatched from oblivion, there are but few years left, and the Club has done well to focus the lights of memory upon such points of reminiscence as may be worth preserving. Diverse as Stevenson was, there are two main aspects of him which here claim our attention; we may regard him as the writer with varied style and vivid pen or as the personality in which charm and spirit were so attractively blended.

But of the writer there is less need to speak; the written letter is handed down, though its continued life must depend upon its capacity to meet new needs and to take on new meanings. If an author can achieve this, he will appeal to the next and succeeding generations without adventitious help. 'There is here question only of the slender figure of charm and geniality, at sight of whom all eyes brightened and all hearts leaped and all tongues were loosened. If no personal memories were recorded, Tusitala would leave behind him in the darkening distance only the fading image and the voice so soon becoming

inaudible. Nothing less than a multiplicity of reminiscences can enable our successors to form any definite conception of what he was like or to understand why in his life-time he appealed to so many of those who came in contact with him.

## 3

## LLOYD OSBORNE

Louis, it seemed, was everybody's hero; Louis was the most wonderful and inspiring of men; his wit, his sayings, his whole piquant attitude towards life were unending subjects of conversation. Everybody said: 'Wait till Louis gets here,' with an eager and expectant air.

Then in the dusk of a summer's day as we all sat at dinner about the long *table d'hôte*, some sixteen or eighteen people, of whom my mother and sister were the only women and I the only child, there was a startling sound at one of the open windows giving on the street, and in vaulted a young man with a dusty knapsack on his back. The whole company rose in an uproar of delight, mobbing the newcomer with out-stretched hands and cries of greeting. He was borne to a chair; was made to sit down in state, and still laughing and talking in the general hubbub was introduced to my mother and sister.

'My cousin, Mr. Stevenson,' said Bob, and there ensued a grave inclination of heads, while I wriggled on my chair very much overcome and shyly stole

peeps at the stranger. He was tall, straight, and well-formed, with a fine ruddy complexion, clustering light-brown hair, a small tawny moustache and extraordinarily brilliant brown eyes. But these details convey nothing of the peculiar sense of power that seemed to radiate from him of a peculiar intensity of character that, while not exactly dominating, had in its quality something infinitely more subtle and winning; and he was besides so gay, so sparkling, so easily the master in all exchange of talk and raillery that I gazed at him in spell-bound admiration.

How incredible it would have seemed to me then had some prophetic voice told me this stranger's life and mine were to run together for nineteen years to come; that I was destined to become his step-son, his comrade, the sharer of all his wanderings; that we were to write books together; that we were to sail far-off seas; that we were to hew a home out of the tropic wilderness; and that at the end, while the whole world mourned, I was to lay his body at rest on a mountain peak in Oceana.

## 4

REV. ARCHIBALD BISSET

I first met him at the house of a University friend and we were discussing in student fashion some questions in Greek philosophy, when Mr. Stevenson was announced. My friend knew him well, and, in introducing him, he added 'son and

successor of Thomas Stevenson, the well-known lighthouse engineer.' 'Son, certainly,' said Stevenson, 'but not successor if I can help it.'

He was a fragile-looking youth of about eighteen, with a very noticeable stoop of the shoulders, and a poorly-developed chest, which suggested constitutional delicacy: and this impression was confirmed by his long hair, which made his face look emaciated. But as a set-off to these signs of physical weakness he had eyes that were quick-glancing and observant and brimful of humour, or, I should rather say, of banter. He had a large but expressive mouth, which led one to anticipate incisive speech, though in saying this I am very likely reading into this first interview impressions derived from future intercourse.

At the University he enrolled as a student in the Greek class (Professor Blackie's), and then attended as seldom as possible. In the mathematical class, absenteeism could not be so easily practised, for here the discipline was strict. It began to be whispered that he would have himself to blame if his name did not appear on the Honours list: and this, he said, led to his conversion for the remainder of the session. His friends twitted him on his sudden devotion to triangles and trigonometry, and he said: 'I know how it would delight my father if even the shadow of the Mathematical Honours list fell on me, and I want to please him.' The truth is, that Stevenson never was a University student in the usual sense of the word. Not only was his attendance at classes

intermittent, but he followed no regular curriculum. Then he took very little part in the work of the classes which he did attend. He used to sit on a far-back bench, pencil in hand and with a note-book before him, and looking as if he were taking notes of the lectures. But in reality he took no notes, and seldom listened to the lectures. 'I prefer,' he used to say, 'to spend the time in writing original nonsense of my own.' He always carried in his pocket a note-book, which he sometimes called his 'Book of Original Nonsense,' and not only during the class-hour, but at all odd times, he jotted down thoughts and fancies in prose and verse. Of course he generally gave class exams. the go-by. And thus it came to pass that, except among his intimates, he was regarded as an idler. An idler, however, he never was. His time and energy, his heart and soul, were devoted to literature; and while he seemed to outsiders an idler, he was reading French and English classics, and filling note-books with attempts to imitate them. He was once spoken to seriously about taking a University degree. 'If literature' said the friend, 'is to be your pursuit, a degree will be all but indispensable.' But he would not be persuaded. 'I would sooner commit to memory,' he said, 'the long bead-roll of names in the early chapters of the Book of Chronicles than cram for a degree-exam.' And so the matter ended . . . . .

## 5

## .SIR SIDNEY COLVIN

The points in his character these recollections chiefly illustrate, are, first, the longing for a life of action and adventure, which in an ordinary youth might have passed as a matter of course but in one already so stricken in health seemed pathetically vain; next, his inborn faculty—a very much rarer gift—as an artist in letters, and the scrupulous self-training by which almost from boyhood he had been privately disciplining it; then the intensely, quite exceptionally, observing and loving interest he took in young children: and above all, that magic power he had of winning the delighted affection, the immediate confidence, of men and women of the most various sorts and conditions, always excepting those hide-bound in starched propriety or conventional officialdom, whom he had a scarce less unfailing power of putting against him at first sight.

## 6

## ROBERT SCOTT-SKIRVING

I first saw Stevenson in Great Stuart Street, in Edinburgh, at the house of Fleeming Jenkin, and I remember well his curious eager face, and bright eyes, and quaint clothes, not violently suitable to the time and place. He had longish hair, some kind of soft shirt, a black short velvet coat, and either then or later some sort of jersey. I daresay many of us

would say that his general rig was affected and foolish—perhaps it was; but such was the compelling charm of R. L. S. that, in him, oddities like those of clothes had a kind of charm, while in others, I am afraid,—now, at any rate,—I would say, ‘Who is that affected young fool?’ Apropos, Stevenson loved fooling, and he did it so well! I remember once Fleeming Jenkin, whom all we young people held in no small awe, being a little put out by Stevenson’s lateness in coming one night. In walked R. L. S., clad in the garments of unconventionality, but with a smile against which one couldn’t keep a stiff face, ‘I’m sorry—but why did you wait for this withered rose-bud?’ How I remember a speech so trifling I can’t say, except that one recollected almost anything he said, especially tomfoolery. One night my sister, who greatly admired him, was at supper next him. He turned, and said ‘Could you eat three Bath buns before breakfast?’ ‘Yes, I could in Islay,’ replied my sister. ‘Thank God, you are yet young,’ said R. L. S.

## 7

## H. J. MOORS

Early in December 1889, the schooner *Equator*, with Stevenson on board, entered Apia harbour. I went aboard. A young-looking man came forward to meet me. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, although really nine years older, of fair and somewhat sallow complexion, and about five feet ten inches in height. He wore a slight, scraggy

moustache, and his hair hung down about his neck after the fashion of artists. This was Stevenson—R. L. S., 'the best-loved initials in recent literature'—and I knew it even before he spoke. He was not a handsome man, and yet there was something irresistibly attractive about him: The genius that was in him seemed to shine out of his face. I was struck at once by his keen, inquiring eyes. Brown in colour, they were strangely bright, and seemed to penetrate you like the eyes of a mesmerist. . . . . Stevenson was charmed with Samoa, and he bubbled over with delight as one enchanted. The prospect that opened out before him seemed to get into his very veins. 'It's grand!' he exclaimed . . . . . It needed not to be told he was in indifferent health, for it was stamped on his face. He appeared to be intensely nervous, highly strung, easily excited. When I first brought him ashore he was looking somewhat weak, but hardly had he got into the street (for Apia is practically a town with but one street) when he began to walk up and down it in a most lively, not to say eccentric, manner. He could not stand still. When I took him into my house, he walked about the room, plying me with questions, one after another, darting up and down, talking on all sorts of subjects, with no continuity whatever in his conversation. His wife was just as fidgety as himself, Lloyd Osbourne not much better. The long lonesome trip on the schooner had quite unnerved them, and they were delighted to be on shore again. . . . .

At last one day Stevenson told me he would like to make his home in Samoa permanently. 'I like this place better than any I have seen in the Pacific,' he said. He had been to Honolulu, and liked it; Tahiti and the Marquesas had pleased him; but of all places he liked Samoa the best. 'Honolulu's good—very good,' he added; 'but this seems more savage!' . . . . .

When in a rage he was a study. Once excite him, and you had another Stevenson. I have seen him in all moods. I have seen him sitting on my table, dangling his long legs in the air, chatting away in the calmest manner possible; and I have seen him, becoming suddenly agitated, jump from that table and stalk to and fro across the floor like some wild forest animal, to which he has, indeed, been already compared. His face would glow and his eyes would flash darkening, lighting, scintillating, hypnotising you with their brilliance and the burning fire within. In calm they were eyes of strange beauty with an expression that is almost beyond the power of pen to describe. 'Eyes half alert, half sorrowful,' said our common friend, Mr. Carruthers, once; and I have neither read nor heard anything which seems to approach so near the mark. They carried in them a strange mixture of what seemed to be at once the sorrow and joy of life, and there appeared to be a haunting sadness in their very brightness. . . . .

Stevenson rose as a rule at six o'clock, though he was up, often enough, as early as four, writing by

lamplight. He wrote at all hours, and at all times. Oftentimes he would come down town on 'Jack' and tell me he had got 'stuck' in some passage of a story and was out in search of an inspiration. 'The orange is squeezed out' he would say. He used generally to wear a little white yachting cap worth about twenty-five cents. As he was very thin and boyish in appearance, the cap suited him. I never saw him in a stiff shirt nor a stand-up collar in my life. Up at Vailima they all went about in their bare feet except when expecting guests, and generally looked about half-dressed. When Stevenson came into Apia he still looked only half-dressed. He always came down with a soft shirt on and generally white flannel trousers, sometimes with a red sash tied round the waist. He was very careless about his personal adornment, just 'a man of shirt-sleeves;' and his clothes invariably had the appearance of being a misfit, because of his extremely slight frame. . . .

Stevenson was a charming host, and it mattered not whether he was receiving Europeans or natives. Everybody felt thoroughly at home at Vailima. There were invariably several dinner-parties there when a British or American warship put into port. In him the navy had a great champion, and he used to have a printed list of the warships that had been to Apia fixed up in front of his house, and every succeeding ship that arrived duly had its name printed there. To meet the officers from these ships a number of friends would be invited to Vailima, for the afternoon and evening. While dinner was being

prepared the guests would sit on the wide veranda, smoking and talking, and an 'appetiser' would be handed round. Those were happy times. Stevenson the writer, the talker, the charmer, was in his element. He loved to have friends around him. Over the dinner plates he entertained the company with his anecdotes. But he never monopolised the conversation; he was as ready a listener as he was a ready talker.

## 8

## MARGARET MOYES BLACK

One of his greatest charms was that marvellous youthfulness which so endeared him to his juniors and which no prolonged sufferings from bad health could ever impair. His buoyant freshness of mind and outlook made him look on life with the eager gladness of a boy. Most grown-up folk can be young occasionally; but he was always young, always a boy at heart, always in sympathy with youth and its joys and sorrows. Another thing one always associates with him is courage; a gallant bravery of spirit which through many illnesses and all the worries and troubles of life never forsook him. That, with the brave words he wrote, will help all who knew the man and his books to fight the battle of life heroically.

Memorable also is his deep love of nature, of the free life of 'the open road'; his tenderness and consideration for dogs and horses and all animals; his passionate love of Scotland—the capes and isles

where shine the lighthouses his ancestors lighted, the Pentlands so dear to his heart, the 'wine-red' moors, and, perhaps above all, Edinburgh, old and gray, stern with a grim strength akin to Scottish character, beautiful with a magic beauty. These things lay deep in his heart and were loved all through his life so dearly that it is terribly pathetic to think the man who so loved them had to leave them and live and die in far-off Samoa.

It is curious how when one recalls R. L. S., one sees again the luminous eyes, the graceful bend of the head, the somewhat foreign motion of the hands when speaking, and realises the delight of his conversation; but the actual talk cannot be reproduced by memory. It was charming but illusive; and while one can remember the subjects of his conversations at times, the words slip from one's mind as quicksilver slips through the fingers. Various of his friends have noted this peculiarity. It is strange that one cannot recall the words of a man who was not only a prince of talkers himself, but had the rare gift of making those whom he talked with show at their best in a conversation. In all things he had that delightful power of making others show themselves at their best, and he seemed, for the time being, to share with you his brilliance and his wit.

## 9

DAVID M. LEWIS

.... My next recollection of Stevenson is as a fellow-

pupil at a private school in Frederick Street, Edinburgh, kept by Mr. Thompson. More than ever, he was not the typical schoolboy. He was quiet, almost aloof, and showed but little interest either in us or his lessons. He looked delicate, and when he left the school I fancy it was on account of his health.

During the time we were fellow-pupils, an hour every Friday afternoon was devoted to the writing of essays on some given subject. In after years I asked Mr. Thompson if he had ever noticed in those written by Stevenson anything calling for special remark. 'No,' he replied. 'Except for an occasional striking phrase, they never showed much grasp of, nor interest in, their subject, nor a distinctive literary turn of mind.'

The next, and, alas! practically the last time Stevenson and I were much together was in the last year of his attendance at the Edinburgh University. Then I found him, so to speak, much alive, more communicative, more interesting, more interested; and rapidly fascinating me by his personality, as by his imaginings of adventure he had done at North Berwick. There was to me a likeableness about him as a young man that was not apparent in him as a boy.

In the course of talk and argument about literary matters, Stevenson impressed me then as being quietly, but very certainly, sure that he had it in him to write to some purpose. I think that at this time he was more concerned about how to write than about what to write—more anxious about style

than matter. He seemed to attach great importance to the use of words which from association carried with them a fuller connotation than a merely dictionary one; and to the effectiveness of words and phrases in everyday use when employed in a not altogether usual connection. But any distinctive quality of style always attracted him. I remember a sentence in one of the judgments of the late Lord Moncrieff ('Tulliebole') which greatly delighted him; 'The pursuer, in the confidence engendered by the limitations of a provincial imagination, has arrived at an unsound conclusion founded on the basis of a too limited induction of facts.'

And I thought then, as I think now, that both as a man and an author Stevenson was more fundamentally influenced by the Bible, and particularly by the Old Testament than by any other book.

## 10

## LORD GUTHRIE

All his friends of early days, a fast-diminishing band, will agree in the description of Stevenson, which became a proverb in Samoa : 'Once Tusitala's friend, always Tusitala's friend.' . . . .

I frankly confess I had not the vision, in college days, to foresee his future fame. I do not know that anybody had, except perhaps his mother and Cummy. But I can at least claim that I never mistook the husk for the kernel. The stories about his follies and the follies of his more immediate coterie,

the true stories with a foundation in fact, but all of them grossly exaggerated and distorted, and the false stories, I knew them all. But I never doubted that he had the root of the matter in him; that, with all his surface frivolity and seeming pliability, if it came, in life's crucible, to a question of principle, a clear issue of right and wrong, Stevenson would prove as good as gold and as true as steel.

On a difficult question of discretion and prudence or of legal right, there are many men I would have consulted sooner than Louis Stevenson; but on a nice point of personal honour, or on a question of generous treatment, I would unhesitatingly have placed myself without reserve in his hands.

Stevenson cannot be understood unless the abnormal strength of three elements in his elusive nature receive adequate recognition—the primitive or aboriginal element, the boyish element, and the Bohemian element.

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His choice of Samoa as a residence, about which I shall have something more to say later on, will illustrate the first of these elements. When asked why he selected a place so remote from books and literary friends, he said: 'As regards health, Honolulu suited me equally well—the Alps perhaps better. I chose Samoa instead of Honolulu for the simple and eminently satisfactory reason that it is less civilised.' At another time he said that 'this business of living in towns was counter to the vagabond instincts that preferred a sack in the woods to a bed in a grand hotel!'

Of the boyish element Andrew Lang truly observed: 'Stevenson was always a child, and always a boy. He never lapsed from the child's philosophy:—

"The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

His own view was the same. At Saranac, in New York State, referring to his futile efforts to make the penny whistle a vehicle for musical enjoyment, he wrote: 'I always have some childishness on hand.'

He was fond, in familiar converse, of small jokes, practical and verbal. His letters are full of them. Mrs. Henley gave me a letter to her husband, in which he breaks off, in the midst of serious discourse, into a skit on his faithless correspondents, especially Henley himself, and Sir Sidney Colvin, then Slade Professor at Cambridge:

'All men are not, but there are two—  
Sidney, the oblivious "Slade," and you—  
Who from that rabble stand confest,  
Ten million times the rottenest.  
When I was sick, and safe in gaol,  
I thought my friends would never fail.  
One wrote me nothing; t' other bard  
Sent me an insolent post card.'

Looking broadly and sympathetically at Stevenson's career, apart altogether from his personal

charm, anything that may have to be entered on the debit side of the account will never balance his courage and his high sense of duty.

His courage ! His whole life, what Mr. Edmund Gosse called 'Stevenson's painful and hurrying pilgrimage,' was a triumph of the spirit over the flesh. It was not a mere question of bronchial affection, leading to infirm health. He was in the grip of hæmorrhage of the lungs all his days; he walked in the shadow of death from boyhood to the grave. 'Death had set her Broad Arrow on him,' as his favourite author, Sir Thomas Browne, put it. But he was never the slave of ill-health; it neither mastered him nor corrupted him. With splendid intrepidity he faced round on death, again and again, and beat him off. And in the end, after leading death a dance round the world, he got his wish, that he might die, as he put it, 'with my clothes on.'

In 1885, when staying in the Riviera, he had violent hæmorrhage from the lungs. He was unable to speak, and he wrote on a paper for his wife : 'Don't be frightened. If this is death, it is an easy one.' She ran for the drug which was only to be used in dire extremity. But she was too excited to measure out the dose. He took the bottle and the minim glass, dropped the prescribed quantity with perfectly steady hand, drank it off, and handed bottle and glass back to her with a smile.

Take another instance. 'The Requiem,' in two verses, is engraven in letters of bronze—the best bit of poetry he ever wrote—on his tomb on the pre-

capituous peak of Mount Vaea in Samoa, 1,300 feet above Vailima, alongside the thistle and the hibiscus, and with the words of Ruth to Naomi, 'Thy people shall be my people.' We all know the lines:—

'Under the wide and starry sky  
Dig the grave and let me lie,  
Gladly did I live, and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me :  
"Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill".'

When these haunting verses are read or sung, let us remember that, when he wrote them, he was lying in a half-darkened room, forbidden to speak. His right arm was in a sling, for fear of a return of haemorrhage on that side ; and he could only write with his left hand . . . . . In face of such heroic scenes, and of his imperishable services to humanity, how contemptible all the chatter about youthful eccentricities and follies! In a letter to Baxter, George Wyndham called him 'a grand comrade against adversity, a complete foul-weather friend.'

Let us rather thank God for a Scotsman through whom, as through Scott and Burns, the world has conceived a new admiration and a fresh affection for Scotland. Did not Sir James Barrie say that 'R.L.S.' were the best-loved initials in the English language?

I cited also his devotion to duty. In a sense he

was never free from financial anxieties; expenditure increased in Samoa more than kept pace with increased income. But, except for a brief period before his marriage, the pressing need of ready-money for daily bread never injured the quality of his work. He could always afford to be fastidious and deliberate in the selection and execution of his tasks. Yet he had even a stronger motive and excuse for scamping his work : not actual pain, but the weariness which made the joy of life, and still more the joy of work, arduous to realize. No writing of his was ever scamped. He had as remarkable facility in writing as he had fluency in conversation. But, out of respect to himself, and his friends, and his country, he gave rare honour to his work; he drafted and redrafted, wrote and rewrote, corrected and recorrected, until he could no more. He knew what it was, as he said, 'to go up the great bare staircase of duty uncheered and undepressed.' He scorned what would merely pass muster; he strove continually for the perfect; he may even at times have painted the lily, and overfaceted the gem. And he was too sagacious to dream of sustained perfection. 'Perfect sentences,' he said, 'have often been written; perfect paragraphs at times—but never a perfect page.'

There is no more impressive lesson than the laborious drudgery of this brilliant creature, while learning his business, except it be his painful toil expended upon everything to which he put his name. He modestly said : 'I have only one feather in my

cap; I am not a sloven.' Lord Grey's estimate of Lord Morley in Chambers's Cyclopaedia exactly describes Stevenson's ideal and method: 'He feels that only the best is worth an effort, but that this is worth all effort; while indifference, and mediocrity of aspiration, are the greatest curses of mankind.' While retaining the characteristic merits of an impressionist sketch, Stevenson put all his thought and reading, and all his power of felicitous phrase, with lavish hand, even into casual letters. You feel that they have not been dashed off while carrying on a conversation, or when he was thinking about something else. This applies as well to intimate notes, such as those written to his old nurse, as to important letters for which he may have anticipated publication. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with all his might. . . .

That his works will continue to be read, as those of a master of literature, and that interest will continue to be taken in his engaging personality, so physically frail and so spiritually ardent, and in his lifelong fight for life, is beyond doubt. But it is equally certain that new essayists, new story-tellers, new poets and letter-writers, with romance and charm associated with their personalities, will arise, and have already arisen, to divide and diminish his fame in future generations, living under different conditions and surroundings.

What will be his future rank? Men's ears have been dulled to the real merits of his delicate music by the trumpeting and drum-beating of some of his

idolaters, of both sexes, on both sides of the Atlantic. No reasonable Stevensonian claims for him a place beside Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare. They do not credit him with royal rank, but they claim for him a high place in the aristocracy of literature. Posterity must say whether, and how long, he will continue to wear the duke's strawberry leaves, and whether and when he must descend to the humbler insignia of the baron ! Whatever betide, Richard le Gallienne's lines will never be falsified :

‘Not while a boy still whistles on the earth,  
Not while a single human heart beats true,  
Not while Love lasts, and Honour, and the  
    Brave,  
    Has earth a grave,  
O well-beloved, for you.’

# I

## A COLLEGE MAGAZINE

All through my boyhood and youth I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read, one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words; when I sat by the roadside, I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version-book would be in my hand, to note down the features of the scene or commemorate some halting stanzas. Thus I lived with words. And what I thus wrote was for no ulterior use, it was written consciously for practice. It was not so much that I wished to be an author (though I wished that too) as that I had vowed that I would learn to write. That was a proficiency that tempted me; and I practised to acquire it, as men learn to whittle, in a wager with myself. Description was the principal field of my exercise; for to any one with senses there is always something worth describing, and town and country are but one continuous subject. But I worked in other ways also; often accompanied my walks with dramatic dialogues, in which I played many parts;

and often exercised myself in writing down conversations from memory.

This was all excellent, no doubt; so were the diaries I sometimes tried to keep, but always and very speedily discarded, finding them a school of posturing and melancholy self-deception. And yet this was not the most efficient part of my training. Good though it was, it only taught me (so far as I have learned them at all) the lower and less intellectual elements of the art, the choice of the essential note and the right word : things that to a happier constitution had perhaps come by nature. And regarded as training, it had one grave defect; for it set me no standard of achievement. So that there was perhaps more profit, as there was certainly more effort, in my secret labours at home. Whenever I read a book or a passage that particularly pleased me, in which a thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful, and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction and the co-ordination of parts. I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann. I remember one of these monkey tricks, which was called *The Vanity of Morals*. It was to

have had a second part, *The Vanity of Knowledge*; and as I had neither morality nor scholarship, the names were apt; but the second part was never attempted, and the first part was written (which is my reason for recalling it, ghostlike, from its ashes) no less than three times: first in the manner of Hazlitt, second in the manner of Ruskin, who had cast on me a passing spell, and third, in a laborious pasticcio of Sir Thomas Browne. So with my other works: *Cain*, an epic, was (save the mark!) an imitation of *Sordello*: *Robin Hood*, a tale in verse, took an eclectic middle course among the fields of Keats, Chaucer, and Morris: in *Monmouth*, a tragedy, I reclined on the bosom of Mr. Swinburne; in my innumerable gouty-footed lyrics, I followed many masters; in the first draft of *The King's Pardon*, a tragedy, I was on the trail of no less a man than John Webster; in the second draft of the same piece, with staggering versatility, I had shifted my allegiance to Congreve, and of course conceived my fable in a less serious vein—for it was not Congreve's verse, it was his exquisite prose, that I admired and sought to copy. Even at the age of thirteen I had tried to do justice to the inhabitants of the famous city of Peebles in the style of *The Book of Snobs*. So I might go on for ever, through all my abortive novels, and down to my later plays, of which I think more tenderly, for they were not only conceived at first under the bracing influence of old Dumas, but have met with resurrections: one, strangely bettered by another hand, came on the

stage itself and was played by bodily actors; the other, originally known as *Semiramis: a Tragedy*, I have observed on book-stalls under the alias of *Prince Otto*. But enough has been said to show by what arts of impersonation and in what purely ventriloquial efforts I first saw my words on paper.

That, like it or not, is the way to learn to write; whether I have profited or not, that is the way. It was so Keats learned, and there was never a finer temperament for literature than Keats's; it was so, if we could trace it out, that all men have learned; and that is why a revival of letters is always accompanied or heralded by a cast-back to earlier and fresher models. Perhaps I hear some one cry out: "But this is not the way to be original!" It is not; nor is there any way but to be born so. Nor yet, if you are born original, is there anything in this training that shall clip the wings of your originality. There can be none more original than Montaigne, neither could any be more unlike Cicero; yet no craftsman can fail to see how much the one must have tried in his time to imitate the other. Burns is the very type of a prime force in letters: he was of all men the most imitative. Shakespeare himself, the imperial, proceeds directly from a school. It is only from a school that we can expect to have good writers; it is almost invariably from a school that great writers, these lawless exceptions, issue. Nor is there anything here that should astonish the considerate. Before he can tell what cadences he truly prefers, the student should have tried all that are possible;

before he can choose and preserve a fitting key of language, he should long have practised the literary scales; and it is only after years of such gymnastic that he can sit down at last, legions of words swarming to his call, dozen of turns of phrase simultaneously bidding for his choice, and he himself knowing what he wants to do and (within the narrow limit of a man's ability) able to do it.

And it is the great point of these imitations that there still shines beyond the student's reach his inimitable model. Let him try as he please, he is still sure of failure; and it is a very old and a very true saying that failure is the only highroad to success. I must have had some disposition to learn; for I clear-sightedly condemned my own performances. I liked doing them indeed; but when they were done, I could see they were rubbish. In consequence, I very rarely showed them even to my friends; and such friends as I chose to be my confidants I must have chosen well, for they had the friendliness to be quite plain with me. "Padding," said one. Another wrote: "I cannot understand why you do lyrics so badly." No more could I! Thrice I put myself in the way of a more authoritative rebuff, by sending a paper to a magazine. These were returned; and I was not surprised or even pained. If they had not been looked at, as (like all amateurs) I suspected was the case, there was no good in repeating the experiment; if they had been looked at—well, then I had not yet learned to write, and I must keep on learning and living. Lastly,

I had a piece of good fortune which is the occasion of this paper, and by which I was able to see my literature in print, and to measure experimentally how far I stood from the favour of the public.

## II

### A NIGHT AMONG THE PINES

From Bleynard after dinner, although it was already late, I set out to scale a portion of the Lozère. An ill-marked stony drove-road guided me forward; and I met nearly half a dozen bullock-carts descending from the woods, each laden with a whole pine-tree for the winter's firing. At the top of the woods, which do not climb very high upon this cold ridge, I struck leftward by a path among the pines, until I hit on a dell of green turf, where a streamlet made a little spout over some stones to serve me for a water-tap. "In a more sacred or sequestered bower . . . nor nymph nor faunus haunted." The trees were not old, but they grew thickly round the glade : there was no outlook, except north-eastward upon distant hilltops, or straight upward to the sky; and the encampment felt secure and private like a room. By the time I had made my arrangements and fed Modestine, the day was already beginning to decline. I buckled myself to the knees into my sack and made a hearty meal; and as soon as the sun went down I pulled my cap over my eyes and fell asleep.

[ Night is a dead monotonous period under a

roof : but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes in the face of Nature. What seems a kind of temporal death to people choked between walls and curtains, is only a light and living slumber to the man who sleeps afieid. All night long he can hear Nature breathing deeply and freely; even as she takes her rest, she turns and smiles; and there is one stirring hour unknown to those who dwell in houses, when a wakeful influence goes abroad over the sleeping hemisphere, and all the outdoor world are on their feet. [It is then that the cock first crows, not this time to announce the dawn, but like a cheerful watchman speeding the course of night. Cattle awake on the meadows; sheep break their fast on dewy hillsides, and change to a new lair among the ferns; and houseless men, who have lain down with the fowls, open their dim eyes and behold the beauty of the night.]

At what inaudible summons, at what gentle touch of Nature, are all these sleepers thus recalled in the same hour to life? Do the stars rain down an influence, or do we share some thrill of mother earth below our resting bodies? Even shepherds and old country-folk, who are the deepest read in these arcana, have not a guess as to the means or purpose of this nightly resurrection. Towards two in the morning they declare the thing takes place, and neither know nor inquire further. And at least it is a pleasant incident. We are disturbed in our slumber, only, like the luxurious Montaigne, "that

*self-indulgent, voluptuous*

we may the better and more sensibly relish it." We have a moment to look up on the stars. And there is a special pleasure for some minds in the reflection that we share the impulse with all outdoor creatures in our neighbourhood, that we have escaped out of the Bastille of civilisation, and are become, for the time being, a mere kindly animal and a sheep of Nature's flock.

When that hour came to me among the pines, I wakened thirsty. My tin was standing by me half full of water. I emptied it at a draught; and feeling broad awake after this internal cold aspersion, sat upright to make a cigarette. The stars were clear, coloured, and jewel-like, but not frosty. A faint silvery vapour stood for the Milky Way. All around me the black fir-points stood upright and stock-still. By the whiteness of the pack-saddle, I could see Modestine walking round and round at the length of her tether; I could hear her steadily munching at the sward; but there was not another sound, save the indescribable quiet talk of the runnel over the stones. I lay lazily smoking and studying the colour of the sky, as we call the void of space, from where it showed a reddish grey behind the pines to where it showed a glossy blue-black between the stars. As if to be more like a pedlar, I wear a silver ring. This I could see faintly shining as I raised or lowered the cigarette; and at each whiff the inside of my hand was illuminated, and became for a second the highest light in the landscape.

A faint wind, more like a moving coolness than

a stream of air, passed down the glade from time to time; so that even in my great chamber the air was being renewed all night long. I thought with horror of the inn at Chasseradès and the congregated nightcaps; with horror of the nocturnal prowesses of clerks and students, of hot theatres and pass-keys and close rooms. I have not often enjoyed a more serene possession of myself, nor felt more independent of material aids. The outer world, from which we cower into our houses, seemed after all a gentle habitable place; and night after night a man's bed, it seemed, was laid and waiting for him in the fields, where God keeps an open house. I thought I had rediscovered one of those truths which are revealed to savages and hid from political economists; at the least, I had discovered a new pleasure for myself. And yet even while I was exulting in my solitude I became aware of a strange lack. I wished a companion to lie near me in the starlight, silent and not moving, but ever within touch. For there is a fellowship more quiet even than solitude and which, rightly understood, is solitude made perfect. And to live out of doors with the woman a man loves is of all lives the most complete and free.

As I thus lay, between content and longing, a faint noise stole towards me through the pines. I thought, at first, it was the crowing of cocks or the barking of dogs at some very distant farm; but steadily and gradually it took articulate shape in my ears, until I became aware that a passenger was going by upon the high-road in the valley, and sing-

ing loudly as he went. <sup>his song expressed his feelings</sup> There was more of good-will than grace in his performance; but he trolled with ample lungs, and the sound of his voice took hold upon the hillside and set the air shaking in the leafy glens. I have heard people passing by night in sleeping cities; some of them sang; one, I remember, played loudly on the bagpipes. I have heard the rattle of a cart or carriage spring up suddenly after hours of stillness, and pass, for some minutes, within the range of my hearing as I lay abed. There is a romance about all who are abroad in the black hours, and with something of a thrill we try to guess their business. But here the romance was double: first, this glad passenger, lit internally with wine, who sent up his voice in music through the night; and then I, on the other hand, buckled into my sack, and smoking alone in the pine-woods between four and five thousand feet towards the stars. <sup>in such a position was doubly romantic</sup>

When I awoke again (Sunday, 29th September), many of the stars had disappeared; only the stronger companions of the night still burned visibly overhead; and away towards the east I saw a faint haze of light upon the horizon, such as had been the Milky Way when I was last awake. Day was at hand. I lit my lantern, and by its glow-worm light put on my boots and gaiters; then I broke up some bread for Modestine, filled my can at the water-tap, and lit my spirit-lamp to boil myself some chocolate. The blue darkness lay long in the glade where I had so sweetly slumbered; but soon there was a broad streak of orange melting into gold along the moun-

tain-tops of Vivarais. A solemn glée possessed my mind at this gradual and lovely coming in of day. I heard the runnel with delight; I looked round me for something beautiful and unexpected; but the still black pine-trees, the hollow glade, the munching ass, remained unchanged in figure. Nothing had altered but the light, and that, indeed, shed over all a spirit of life and of breathing peace, and moved me to a strange exhilaration.

I drank my water-chocolate, which was hot if it was not rich, and strolled here and there, and up and down about the glade. While I was thus delaying, a gush of steady wind, as long as a heavy sigh, poured direct out of the quarter of the morning. It was cold, and set me sneezing. The trees near at hand tossed their black plumes in its passage; and I could see the thin distant spires of pine along the edge of the hill rock slightly to and fro against the golden east. Ten minutes later, the sunlight spread at a gallop along the hillside, scattering shadows and sparkles, and the day had come completely.

I hastened to prepare my pack, and tackle the steep ascent that lay before me; but I had something on my mind. It was only a fancy; yet a fancy will sometimes be importunate. I had been most hospitably received and punctually served in my green caravanserai. The room was airy, the water excellent, and the dawn had called me to a moment. I say nothing of the tapestries or the inimitable ceiling, nor yet of the view which I commanded from the

windows; but I felt I was in some one's debt for all this liberal entertainment. And so it pleased me, in a half-laughing way, to leave pieces of money on the turf as I went along, until I had left enough for my night's lodging. I trust they did not fall to some rich and churlish drover.

### III

#### EPILOGUE TO 'AN INLAND VOYAGE'

The country where they journeyed, that green, breezy valley of the Loing, is one very attractive to cheerful and solitary people. The weather was superb; all night it thundered and lightened, and the rain fell in sheets; by day, the heavens were cloudless, the sun fervent, the air vigorous and pure. They walked separate: the Cigarette plodding behind with some philosophy, the lean Arethusa posting on ahead. Thus each enjoyed his own reflections by the way; each had perhaps time to tire of them before he met his comrade at the designated inn; and the pleasures of society and solitude combined to fill the day. The Arethusa carried in his knapsack the works of Charles of Orleans, and employed some of the hours of travel in the concoction of English roundels. In this path, he must thus have preceded Mr. Lang, Mr. Dobson, Mr. Henley, and all contemporary roundeleers; but for good reasons, he will be the last to publish the result. The Cigarette walked burthened with a volume of Michelet. And both these books, it will be seen, played a part in the subsequent adventure.

The Arethusa was unwisely dressed. He is no

*significantly, precisely, with a water-soaked*  
precisian in attire: but by all accounts, he was never  
so ill-inspired as on that tramp, having set forth  
indeed, upon a moment's notice, from the most unfashionable spot in Europe, Barbizon. On his head  
he wore a smoking-cap of Indian work, the gold lace  
pitifully frayed and tarnished. A flannel shirt of  
an agreeable dark hue, which the satirical called  
black; a light tweed coat made by a good English  
tailor, ready-made cheap linen trousers and leathern  
gaiters completed his array. In person, he is excep-  
tionally lean; and his face is not, like those of happier  
mortals, a certificate. For years he could not pass a  
frontier or visit a bank without suspicion; the police  
everywhere, but in his native city, looked askance  
upon him; and (though I am sure it will not be  
credited) he is actually denied admittance to the  
casino of Monte Carlo. If you will imagine him,  
dressed as above, stooping under his knapsack,  
walking nearly five miles an hour with the folds of  
the ready-made trousers fluttering about his spindle  
shanks, and still looking eagerly round him as if in  
terror of pursuit—the figure, when realised, is far  
from reassuring. When Villon journeyed (perhaps  
by the same pleasant valley) to his exile at Roussil-  
lon, I wonder if he had not something of the same  
appearance. Something of the same preoccupation  
he had beyond a doubt, for he too must have  
tinkered verses as he walked, with more success than  
his successor. And if he had anything like the same  
inspiring weather, the same nights of uproar, men  
in armour rolling and resounding down the stairs of  
*is a human roll of music*

heaven, the rain hissing on the village streets, the wild bull's-eye of the storm flashing all night long into the bare inn-chamber—the same sweet return of day, the same unfathomable blue of noon, the same high-coloured, halcyon eves—and above all, if he had anything like as good a comrade, anything like as keen a relish for what he saw, and what he ate, and the rivers that he bathed in, and the rubbish that he wrote, I would exchange estates today with the poor exile, and count myself a gainer.

But there was another point of similarity between the two journeys, for which the Arethusa was to pay dear: both were gone upon in days of incomplete security. It was not long after the Franco-Prussian war. Swiftly as men forget, that countryside was still alive with tales of uhlans, and outlying sentries, and hairbreadth escapes from the ignominious cord, and pleasant momentary friendships between invader and invaded. A year, at the most two years later, you might have tramped all that country over and not heard one anecdote. And a year or two later, you would—if you were a rather ill-looking young man in nondescript array—have gone your rounds in greater safety; for along with more interesting matter, the Prussian spy would have somewhat faded from men's imaginations.

For all that, our voyager had got beyond Château Renard before he was conscious of arousing wonder. On the road between that place and Châtillon-sur-Loing, however, he encountered a rural postman; they fell together in talk, and spoke

- ① semibreve (Soleil) passed the day
- ② very narrow
- ③ infamous, sinister

of a variety of subjects; but through one and all, the postman was still visibly preoccupied, and his eyes were faithful to the Arethusa's knapsack. At last, with mysterious roguishness, he inquired what it contained, and on being answered, shook his head with kindly incredulity. '*Non*', said he, '*non, vous avez des portraits*'. And then with a languishing appeal, *Voyons*, show me the portraits! It was some little while before the Arethusa, with a shout of laughter, recognised his drift. By portraits he meant indecent photographs, and in the Arethusa, an austere and rising author, he thought to have identified a pornographic colporteur. When countryfolk in France have made up their minds as to a person's calling, argument is fruitless. Along all the rest of the way, the postman piped and fluted meltingly to get a sight of the collection; now he would upbraid, now he would reason—'*Voyons*, I will tell nobody'; then he tried corruption, and insisted on paying for a glass of wine, and at last, when their ways separated—'*Non*', said he, '*ce n'est pas bien de votre part. O non, ce n'est pas bien*'. And shaking his head with quite a sentimental sense of injury, he departed unrefreshed.

On certain little difficulties encountered by the Arethusa at Châtillon-sur-Loing, I have not space to dwell; another Châtillon, of grislier memory, looms too near at hand. But the next day, in a certain hamlet called La Jussière, he stopped to drink a glass of syrup in a very poor, bare drinking shop. The hostess, a comely woman, suckling a

child, examined the traveller with kindly and pitying eyes. 'You are not of this department?' she asked. The Arethusa told her he was English. 'Ah!' she said, surprised. 'We have no English! We have many Italians, however, and they do very well; they do not complain of the people of hereabouts. An Englishman may do very well also; it will be something new'. Here was a dark saying, over which the Arethusa pondered as he drank his grenadine; but when he rose and asked what was to pay, the light came upon him in a flash. 'O, *pour vous*,' replied the landlady, 'a halfpenny!' *Pour vous?* By heaven, she took him for a beggar! He paid his halfpenny, feeling that it were ungracious to correct her. But when he was forth again upon the road, he became vexed in spirit. The conscience is no gentleman, he is a rabbinical fellow; and his conscience told him he had stolen the syrup.

That night the travellers slept in Gien; the next day they passed the river and set forth (severally, as their custom was) on a short stage through the green plain upon the Berry side, to Châtillon-sur-Loire. It was the first day of the shooting; and the air rang with the report of firearms and the admiring cries of sportsmen. Overhead the birds were in consternation, wheeling in clouds, settling and re-arising. And yet with all this bustle on either hand, the road itself lay solitary. The Arethusa smoked a pipe beside a milestone, and I remember he laid down very exactly all he was to do at Châtillon: how he was to enjoy a cold plunge, to change his shirt, and

to await the Cigarette's arrival, in sublime inaction, by the margin of the Loire. Fired by these ideas, he pushed the more rapidly forward, and came, early in the afternoon and in a breathing heat, to the entering-in of that ill-fated town. Childe Roland to the dark tower came.

A polite gendarme threw his shadow on the path.

'*Monsieur est voyageur?*' he asked.

And the Arethusa, strong in his innocence, forgetful of his vile attire, replied—I had almost said with gaiety: 'So it would appear.'

'His papers are in order?' said the gendarme. And when the Arethusa, with a slight change of voice, admitted he had none, he was informed (politely enough) that he must appear before the Commissary.

The Commissary sat at a table in his bedroom, stripped to the shirt and trousers, but still copiously perspiring; and when he turned upon the prisoner a large meaningless countenance, that was (like Bardolph's) 'all whelks and bubuckles', the dullest might have been prepared for grief. Here was a stupid man, sleepy with the heat and fretful at the interruption, whom neither appeal nor argument could reach.

THE COMMISSARY. You have no papers?

THE ARETHUSA. Not here.

THE COMMISSARY. Why?

THE ARETHUSA. I have left them behind in my valise.

*W. P. 201*

THE COMMISSARY. You know, however, that is forbidden to circulate without papers?

THE ARETHUSA. Pardon me: I am convinced of the contrary. I am here on my rights as an English subject by international treaty.

THE COMMISSARY (*with scorn*). You call yourself an Englishman?

THE ARETHUSA. I do.

THE COMMISSARY. Humph.—What is your trade?

THE ARETHUSA. I am a Scotch advocate.

THE COMMISSARY (*with singular annoyance*). A Scotch advocate! Do you then pretend to support yourself by that in this department?

The Arethusa modestly disclaimed the pretension. The Commissary had scored a point.

THE COMMISSARY. Why, then, do you travel?

THE ARETHUSA. I travel for pleasure.

THE COMMISSARY. (*Pointing to the knapsack, and with sublime incredulity*). *Avec ça? Voyez-vous, je suis un homme intelligent!* (With that? Look here, I am a person of intelligence!).

The culprit remaining silent under his home thrust, the Commissary relished his triumph for a while, and then demanded (like the postman, but with what different expectations!) to see the contents of the knapsack. And here the Arethusa, not yet sufficiently awake to his position, fell into a grave mistake. There was little or no furniture in the room except the Commissary's chair and table; and to facilitate matters, the Arethusa (with all the inno-

cence on earth) leant the knapsack on a corner of the bed. The Commissary fairly bounded from his seat; his face and neck flushed past purple, almost into blue; and he screamed to lay the desecrating object on the floor.

The knapsack proved to contain a change of shirts, of shoes, of socks, and of linen trousers, a small dressing case, a piece of soap in one of the shoes, two volumes of the *Collection Jannet* lettered *Poésies de Charles d'Orléans*, a map, and a version book containing divers notes in prose and the remarkable English roundels of the voyager, still to this day unpublished: the Commissary of Châtillon is the only living man who has clapped an eye on these artistic trifles. He turned the assortment over with a contumelious finger; it was plain from his daintiness that he regarded the Arethusa and all his belongings as the very temple of infection. Still there was nothing suspicious about the map, nothing really criminal except the roundels; as for Charles of Orleans, to the ignorant mind of the prisoner, he seemed as good as a certificate; and it was supposed the farce was nearly over.

The inquisitor resumed his seat.

THE COMMISSARY (*after a pause*). *Eh bien, je vais vous dire ce que vous êtes. Vous êtes allemand et vous venez chanter à la foire.* (Well, then, I will tell you what you are. You are a German and have come to sing at the fair).

THE ARETHUSA. Would you like to hear me

sing? I believe I could convince you of the contrary.

THE COMMISSARY. *Pas de plaisanterie, monsieur!*

THE ARETHUSA. Well, sir, oblige me at least by looking at this book. Here, I open it with my eyes shut. Read one of these songs—read this one! and tell me, you who are a man of intelligence, if it would be possible to sing it at a fair?

THE COMMISSARY (*critically*). *Mais oui. Tres bien.*

THE ARETHUSA. *Comment, monsieur!* What! But do you not observe it is antique? It is difficult to understand, even for you and me; but for the audience at a fair, it would be meaningless.

THE COMMISSARY (*taking a pen*). *Enfin, il faut en finit.* What is your name?

THE ARETHUSA (*speaking with the swallowing vivacity of the English*). Robert-Louis-Stev'ns'n.

THE COMMISSARY (*aghast*). *Hé! Quoi?*

THE ARETHUSA (*perceiving and improving his advantage*). Rob'rt-Lou's-Stev'ns'n.

THE COMMISSARY (*after several conflicts with his pen*). *Eh bien, il faut se passer du nom. Ça ne s'écrit pas.* (Well, we must do without the name; it is unspellable).

The above is a rough summary of this momentous conversation, in which I have been chiefly careful to preserve the plums of the Commissary; but the remainder of the scene, perhaps because of his rising anger, has left but little definite in the memory

of the Arethusa. The Commissary was not, I think, a practised literary man; no sooner, at least, had he taken pen in hand and embarked on the composition of the *procès-verbal*, than he became distinctly more uncivil and began to show a predilection for that simplest of all forms of repartee: 'You lie!' Several times the Arethusa let it pass, and then suddenly flared up, refused to accept more insults or to answer further questions, defied the Commissary to do his worst, and promised him, if he did, that he should bitterly repent it. Perhaps if he had worn this proud front from the first, instead of beginning with a sense of entertainment and then going on to argue, the thing might have turned otherwise; for even at this eleventh hour the Commissary was visibly staggered. But it was too late; he had been challenged; the *procès-verbal* was begun, and he again squared his elbows over his writing, and the Arethusa was led forth a prisoner.

A step or two down the hot road stood the gendarmerie. Thither was our unfortunate conducted, and there he was bidden to empty forth the contents of his pockets. A handkerchief, a pen, a pencil, a pipe and tobacco, matches, and some ten francs of change: that was all. Not a file, not a cipher, not a scrap of writing whether to identify or to condemn. The very gendarme was appalled before such destitution.

'I regret' he said, 'that I arrested you, for I see that you are no *voyou*'. And he promised him every indulgence.

The Arethusa, thus encouraged, asked for his pipe. That he was told was impossible, but if he chewed, he might have some tobacco. He did not chew, however, and asked instead to have his handkerchief.

'Non,' said the gendarme. '*Nous avons eu des histoires de gens qui se sont pendus.*' (No, we have had histories of people who hanged themselves).

'What,' cried the Arethusa. 'And is it for that you refuse me my handkerchief? But see how much more easily I could hang myself in my trousers!'

The man was struck by the novelty of the idea; but he stuck to his colours, and only continued to repeat vague offers of service.

'At least,' said the Arethusa, 'be sure that you arrest my comrade; he will follow me ere long on the same road, and you can tell him by the sack upon his shoulders.'

This promised, the prisoner was led round into the back court of the building, a cellar door was opened, he was motioned down the stair, and bolts grated and chains clanged behind his descending person.

The philosophic and still more the imaginative mind is apt to suppose itself prepared for any mortal accident. Prison, among other ills, was one that had been often faced by the undaunted Arethusa. Even as he went down the stairs, he was telling himself that here was a famous occasion for a roundel, and that like the committed linnets of the tuneful cavalier, he too would make his prison musical. I

will tell the truth at once. The roundel was never written, or it should be printed in this place, to raise a smile. Two seasons interfered : the first moral, the second physical.

✓ It is one of the curiosities of human nature, that although all men are liars, they can none of them bear to be told so of themselves. To get and take the lie with equanimity is a stretch beyond the stoic, and the Arethusa, who had been surfeited upon that insult, was blazing inwardly with a white heat of smothered wrath. But the physical had also its part. The cellar in which he was confined was some feet underground, and it was only lighted by an unglazed, narrow aperture high up in the wall and smothered in the leaves of a green vine. The walls were of naked masonry, the floor of bare earth; by way of furniture there was an earthenware basin, a water-jug, and a wooden bedstead with a blue-gray cloak for bedding. To be taken from the hot air of a summer's afternoon, the reverberation of the road and the stir of rapid exercise, and plunged into the gloom and damp of this receptacle for vagabonds, struck an instant chill upon the Arethusa's blood. Now see in how small a matter a hardship may consist : the floor was exceedingly uneven underfoot, with the very spade-marks, I suppose, of the labourers who dug the foundations of the barrack; and what with the poor twilight and the irregular surface, walking was impossible. The caged author resisted for a good while; but the chill of the place struck deeper and deeper; and at length, with

such reluctance as you may fancy, he was driven to climb upon the bed and wrap himself in the public covering. There, then, he lay upon the verge of shivering, plunged in semi-darkness, wound in a garment whose touch he dreaded like the plague, and (in a spirit far removed from resignation) telling the roll of the insults he had just received. These are not circumstances favourable to the muse.

Meantime (to look at the upper surface where the sun was still shining and the guns of sportsmen were still noisy through the tufted plain) the Cigarette was drawing near at his more philosophic pace. In those days of liberty and health he was the constant partner of the Arethusa, and had ample opportunity to share in that gentleman's disfavour with the police. Many a bitter bowl had he partaken of with that disastrous comrade. He was himself a man born to float easily through life, his face and manner artfully recommending him to all. There was but one suspicious circumstance he could not carry off, and that was his companion. He will not readily forget the Commissary in what is ironically called the free town of Frankfort-on-the-Main; nor the Franco-Belgian frontier; nor the inn at La Fère; last, but not least, he is pretty certain to remember Châtillon-sur-Loire.

At the town entry, the gendarme culled him like a wayside flower; and a moment later, two persons, in a high state of surprise, were confronted in the Commissary's office. For if the Cigarette was surprised to be arrested, the Commissary was no less

taken aback by the appearance and appointments of his captive. Here was a man about whom there could be no mistake : a man of an unquestionable and unassailable manner, in apple-pie order, dressed not with neatness merely but elegance, ready with his passport, at a word, and well supplied with money; a man a Commissary would have doffed his hat to on chance upon the highway; and this *beau cavalier* unblushingly claimed the Arethusa for his comrade ! The conclusion of the interview was foregone; of its humours, I remember only one. "Baronet ?" demanded the Magistrate, glancing up from the passport. '*Alors, monsieur, vous êtes le fils d'un baron ?*' And when the Cigarette (his one mistake throughout the interview) denied the soft impeachment, '*Alors,*' from the Commissary, '*ce n'est pas votre passeport !*' But these were ineffectual thunders; he never dreamed of laying hands upon the Cigarette; presently he fell into a mood of unrestrained admiration, gloating over the contents of the knapsack, commending our friend's tailor. Ah, what an honoured guest was the Commissary entertaining ! what suitable clothes he wore for the warm weather ! what beautiful maps, what an attractive work of history he carried in his knapsack ! You are to understand there was now but one point of difference between them : what was to be done with the Arethusa ? The Cigarette demanding his release, the Commissary still claiming him as the dungeon's own. Now it chanced that the Cigarette had passed some years of his life in Egypt, where he

had made acquaintance with two very bad things, cholera morbus and pashas; and in the eye of the Commissary, as he fingered the volume of Michelet, it seemed to our traveller there was something Turkish. I pass over this lightly; it is highly possible there was some misunderstanding, highly possible that the Commissary (charmed with his visitor) supposed the attraction to be mutual and took for an act of growing friendship what the Cigarette himself regarded as a bribe. And at any rate, was there ever a bribe more singular than an odd volume of Michelet's history? The work was promised him for the morrow, before our departure; and presently after, either because he had his price, or to show that he was not the man to be behind in friendly offices—'Eh bien', he said, '*je suppose qu'il faut lâcher votre camarade*'. And he tore up that feast of humour, the unfinished *procès-verbal*. Ah, if he had only torn up instead the Arethusa's roundels! There were many works burnt at Alexandria, there are many treasured in the British Museum, that I could better spare than the *procès-verbal* of Châtillon. Poor be buckled Commissary! I begin to be sorry that he never had his Michelet: perceiving in him fine human traits, a broad-based stupidity, a gusto in his magisterial functions, a taste for letters, a ready admiration for the admirals. And if he did not admire the Arethusa, he was not alone in that.

To the imprisoned one, shivering under the public covering there came suddenly a noise of bolts and chains. He sprang to his feet, ready to welcome

a companion in calamity; and instead of that, the door was flung wide, the friendly gendarme appeared above in the strong daylight, and with a magnificent gesture (being probably a student of the drama)—*'Vous êtes libre !'* he said. None too soon for the Arethusa. I doubt if he had been half-an-hour imprisoned; but by the watch in a man's brain (which was the only watch he carried) he should have been eight times longer; and he passed forth with ecstasy up the cellar steps into the healing warmth of the afternoon sun; and the breath of the earth, came as sweet as a cow's into his nostril; and he heard again (and could have laughed for pleasure) the concord of delicate noises that we call the hum of life.

And here it might be thought that my history ended; but not so, this was an act-drop and not the curtain. Upon what followed in front of the barrack, since there was a lady in the case, I scruple to expatiate. The wife of the Maréchal-des-logis was a handsome woman, and yet the Arethusa was not sorry to be gone from her society. Something of her image, cool as a peach on that hot afternoon, still lingers in his memory : yet more of her conversation. 'You have there a very fine parlour,' said the poor gentleman—'Ah,' said Madame la Maréchale (des-logis), 'you are very well acquainted with such parlours !' And you should have seen with what a hard and scornful eye she measured the vagabond before her ! I do not think he ever hated the Commissary; but before that interview was at an end, he hated Madame la Maréchale. His passion

*E. Ordway*  
*in 1872*  
*room in the*

*defining him  
with her sawy remarks*

(as I am led to understand by one who was present) stood confessed in a burning eye, a pale cheek, and a trembling utterance; Madame meanwhile testing the joys of the matador, goading him with barbed words and staring him coldly down. *thinking unkind stuff*

It was certainly good to be away from this lady, and better still to sit down to an excellent dinner in the inn. Here, too, the despised travellers scraped acquaintance with their next neighbour, a gentleman of these parts, returned from the day's sport, who had the good taste to find pleasure in their society. The dinner at an end, the gentleman proposed the acquaintance should be ripened in the café.

The café was crowded with sportsmen con-  
stantly explaining to each other and the world the smallness of their bags. About the centre of the room, the Cigarette and the Arethusa sat with their new acquaintance; a trio very well pleased, for the travellers (after their late experience) were greedy of consideration and their sportsman rejoiced in a pair of patient listeners. Suddenly the glass door flew open with a crash; the Maréchal-des-logis appeared in the interval gorgeously belted and befrogged, entered without salutation, strode up the room with a clang of spurs and weapons, and disappeared through a door at the far end. Close at his heels followed the Arethusa's gendarme of the afternoon, imitating, with a nice shade of difference, the imperial bearing of his chief; only, as he passed, he struck lightly with his open hand on the shoulder

*At her  
sawyer*

of his late captive, and with that ringing, dramatic utterance of which he had the secret—'Suivez !' said he.

The arrest of the members, the oath of the Tennis Court, the signing of the declaration of independence, Mark Antony's oration, all the brave scenes of history, I conceive as having been not unlike that evening in the café at Châtillon. Terror breathed upon the assembly. A moment later, when the Arethusa had followed his recaptors into the farther part of the house, the Cigarette found himself alone with his coffee in a ring of empty chairs and tables, all the lusty sportsmen huddled into corners, all their clamorous voices hushed in whispering, all their eyes shooting at him furtively as at a leper.

And the Arethusa ? Well, he had a long, sometimes a trying, interview in the back kitchen. The Maréchal-des-logis, who was a very handsome man, and I believe both intelligent and honest, had no clear opinion on the case. He thought the Commissary had done wrong, but he did not wish to get his subordinates into trouble; and he proposed this, that, and the other, to all of which the Arethusa (with a growing sense of his position) demurred.

'In short,' suggested the Arethusa, 'you want to wash your hands of further responsibility ? Well, then, let me go to Paris.'

The Maréchal-des-logis looked at his watch.

'You may leave,' said he, 'by the ten o'clock train for Paris.'

And at noon the next day the travellers were telling their misadventure in the dining-room at Siron's.

#### IV

### WILL O' THE MILL

#### THE PLAIN AND THE STARS

The Mill where Will lived with his adopted parents stood in a falling valley between pinewoods and great mountains. Above, hill after hill soared upwards until they soared out of the depth of the hardest timber, and stood naked against the sky. Some way up, a long grey village lay like a seam or a rag of vapour on a wooded hillside; and when the wind was favourable, the sound of the church bells would drop down, thin and silvery, to Will. Below, the valley grew ever steeper and steeper, and at the same time widened out on either hand; and from an eminence beside the mill it was possible to see its whole length and away beyond it over a wide plain, where the river turned and shone, and moved on from city to city on its voyage towards the sea. It chanced that over this valley there lay a pass into a neighbouring kingdom; so that, quiet and rural as it was, the road that ran along beside the river was a high thoroughfare between two splendid and powerful societies. All through the summer, travelling-carriages came crawling up, or went plunging briskly downwards past the mill; and as it happened that the

other side was very much easier of ascent, the path was not much frequented, except by people going in one direction; and of all the carriages that Will saw go by, five-sixths were plunging briskly downwards and only one-sixth crawling up. Much more was this the case with foot-passengers. All the light-footed tourists, all the pedlars laden with strange wares, were tending downward like the river that accompanied their path. Nor was this all; for when Will was yet a child a disastrous war arose over a great part of the world. The newspapers were full of defeats and victories, the earth rang with cavalry hoofs, and often for days together and for miles around the coil of battle terrified good people from their labours in the field. Of all this, nothing was heard for a long time in the valley; but at last one of the commanders pushed an army over the pass by forced marches, and for three days horse and foot, cannon and tumbril, drum and standard, kept pouring downward past the mill. All day the child stood and watched them on their passage; the rhythmical stride, the pale, unshaven faces tanned about the eyes, the discoloured regimentals and the tattered flags, filled him with a sense of weariness, pity, and wonder; and all night long, after he was in bed, he could hear the cannon pounding and the feet trampling, and the great armament sweeping onward and downward past the mill. No one in the valley ever heard the fate of the expedition, for they lay out of the way of gossip in those troublous times; but Will saw one thing plainly, that not a man

returned. Whither had they all gone? Whither went all the tourists and pedlars with strange wares? Whither all the brisk barouches with servants in the dicky? Whither the water of the stream, ever coursing downward, and ever renewed from above? Even the wind blew oftener down the valley, and carried the dead leaves along with it in the fall. It seemed like a great conspiracy of things animate and inanimate; they all went downward, fleetly and gaily downward, and only he, it seemed, remained behind, like a stock upon the wayside. It sometimes made him glad when he noticed how the fishes kept their heads up stream. They, at least, stood faithfully by him, while all else were posting downward to the unknown world.

One evening he asked the miller where the river went.

"It goes down the valley" answered he, "and turns a power of mills—six score mills, they say, from here to Unterdeck—and it none the wearier after all. And then it goes out into the lowlands, and waters the great corn country, and runs through a sight of fine cities (so they say) where kings live all alone in great palaces, with a sentry walking up and down before the door. And it goes under bridges with stone men upon them, looking down and smiling so curious at the water, and living folks leaning their elbows on the wall and looking over too. And then it goes on and on, and down through marshes and sands, until at last it falls into the sea, where the ships are that bring parrots and tobacco from the

Indies. Ay, it has a long trot before it as it goes singing over our weir, bless its heart !”

“And what is the sea ?” asked Will.

“The sea !” cried the miller. “Lord help us all, it is the greatest thing God made ! That is where all the water in the world runs down into a great salt lake. There it lies, as flat as my hand, and as innocent-like as a child; but they do say when the wind blows it gets up into water-mountains bigger than any of ours, and swallows down great ships bigger than our mill, and makes such a roaring that you can hear it miles away upon the land. There are great fish in it five times bigger than a bull, and one old serpent as long as our river, and as old as all the world, with whiskers like a man and a crown of silver on her head.”

Will thought he had never heard anything like this, and he kept on asking question after question about the world that lay away down the river, with all its perils and marvels, until the old miller became quite interested himself, and at last took him by the hand and led him to the hill-top that overlooks the valley and the plain. The sun was near setting, and hung low down in a cloudless sky. Everything was defined and glorified in golden light. Will had never seen so great an expanse of country in his life; he stood and gazed with all his eyes. He could see the cities, and the woods and fields, and the bright curves of the river, and far away to where the rim of the plain trenched along the shining heavens. An over-mastering emotion seized upon

the boy, soul and body; his heart beat so thickly that he could not breathe; the scene swam before his eyes; the sun seemed to wheel round and round, and throw off, as it turned, strange shapes which disappeared with the rapidity of thought, and were succeeded by others. Will covered his face with his hands, and burst into a violent fit of tears; and the poor miller, sadly disappointed and perplexed, saw nothing better for it than to take him up in his arms and carry him home in silence.

From that day forward Will was full of new hopes and longings. Something kept tugging at his heart-strings; the running water carried his desires along with it as he dreamed over its fleeting surface; the wind, as it ran over innumerable tree-tops, hailed him with encouraging words; branches beckoned downward; the open road, as it shouldered round the angles and went turning and vanishing fast and faster down the valley, tortured him with its solicitations. He spent long whiles on the eminence, looking down the rivershed and abroad on the fat lowlands, and watched the clouds that travelled forth upon the sluggish wind and trailed their purple shadows on the plain; or he would linger by the wayside, and follow the carriages with his eyes as they rattled downward by the river. It did not matter what it was; everything that went that way, were it cloud or carriage, bird, or brown water in the stream, he felt his heart flow out after it in an ecstasy of longing.

We are told by men of science that all the

ventures of mariners on the sea, all that counter-marching of tribes and races that confounds old history with its dust and rumour, spring from nothing more abstruse than the laws of supply and demand, and a certain natural instinct for cheap rations. To any one thinking deeply, this will seem a dull and pitiful explanation. The tribes that came swarming out of the North and East, if they were indeed pressed onward from behind by others, were drawn at the same time by the magnetic influence of the South and West. The fame of other lands had reached them; the name of the eternal city rang in their ears; they were not colonists, but pilgrims; they travelled towards wine and gold and sunshine, but their hearts were set on something higher. That divine unrest, that old stinging trouble of humanity that makes all high achievements and all miserable failure, the same that spread wings with Icarus, the same that sent Columbus into the desolate Atlantic, inspired and supported these barbarians on their perilous march. There is one legend which profoundly represents their spirit, of how a flying party of these wanderers encountered a very old man shod with iron. The old man asked them whither they were going; and they answered with one voice: "To the Eternal City!" He looked upon them gravely. "I have sought it," he said, "over the most part of the world. Three such pairs as I now carry on my feet have I worn out upon this pilgrimage, and now the fourth is growing slender underneath my steps. And all this while I have not found the city." And

he turned and went his own way alone, leaving them astonished.

And yet this would scarcely parallel the intensity of Will's feeling for the plain. If he could only go far enough out there, he felt as if his eyesight would be purged and clarified, as if his hearing would grow more delicate, and his very breath would come and go with luxury. He was transplanted and withering where he was; he lay in a strange country and was sick for home. Bit by bit, he pieced together broken notions of the world below : of the river, ever moving and growing until it sailed forth into the majestic ocean; of the cities, full of brisk and beautiful people, playing fountains, bands of music and marble palaces, and lighted up at night from end to end with artificial stars of gold; of the great churches, wise universities, brave armies, and untold money lying stored in vaults; of the high-flying vice that moved in the sunshine, and the stealth and swiftness of midnight murder. I have said he was sick as if for home: the figure halts. He was like some one lying in twilit, formless pre-existence, and stretching out his hands lovingly towards many-coloured, many-sounding life. It was no wonder he was unhappy, he would go and tell the fish; they were made for their life, wished for no more than worms and running water, and a hole below a falling bank; but he was differently designed, full of desires and aspirations, itching at the fingers, lusting with the eyes, whom the whole variegated world could not satisfy with aspects. The

true life, the true bright sunshine, lay far out upon the plain, and, O ! to see this sunlight once before he died ! to move with a jocund spirit in a golden land ! to hear the trained singers and sweet church bells, and see the holiday gardens ! "And, O fish !" he would cry, "if you would only turn your noses down stream, you could swim so easily into the fabled waters and see the vast ships passing over your head like clouds, and hear the great water-hills making music over you all day long !" But the fish kept looking patiently in their own direction, until Will hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

Hitherto the traffic on the road had passed by Will, like something seen in a picture : he had perhaps exchanged salutations with a tourist, or caught sight of an old gentleman in a travelling cap at a carriage window; but for the most part it had been a mere symbol, which he contemplated from apart and with something of a superstitious feeling. A time came at last when this was to be changed. The miller, who was a greedy man in his way, and never forwent an opportunity of honest profit, turned the mill-house into a little wayside inn, and, several pieces of good fortune falling in opportunely, built stables and got the position of postmaster on the road. It now became Will's duty to wait upon people, as they sat to break their fasts in the little arbour at the top of the mill garden; and you may be sure that he kept his ears open, and learned many new things about the outside world as he brought the omelette or the wine. Nay, he would often get into

conversation with single guests, and by adroit questions and polite attention, not only gratify his own curiosity, but win the goodwill of the travellers. Many complimented the old couple on their serving-boy; and a professor was eager to take him away with him, and have him properly educated in the plain. The miller and his wife were mightily astonished, and even more pleased. They thought it a very good thing that they should have opened their inn. "You see," the old man would remark, "he has a kind of talent for a publican; he never would have made anything else!" And so life wagged on in the valley, with high satisfaction to all concerned but Will. Every carriage that left the inn-door seemed to take a part of him away with it; and when people jestingly offered him a lift, he could with difficulty command his emotion. Night after night he would dream that he was awakened by flustered servants, and that a splendid equipage waited at the door to carry him down into the plain; night after night; until the dream, which had seemed all jollity to him at first, began to take on a colour of gravity, and the nocturnal summons and waiting equipage occupied a place in his mind as something to be both feared and hoped for.

One day, when Will was about sixteen, a fat young man arrived at sunset to pass the night. He was a contented-looking fellow, with a jolly eye, and carried a knapsack. While dinner was preparing, he sat in the arbour to read a book; but as soon as he had begun to observe Will, the book was laid

aside; he was plainly one of those who prefer living people to people made of ink and paper. Will, on his part, although he had not been much interested in the stranger at first sight, soon began to take a great deal of pleasure in his talk, which was full of good nature and good sense, and at last conceived a great respect for his character and wisdom. They sat far into the night; and about two in the morning Will opened his heart to the young man, and told him how he longed to leave the valley, and what bright hopes he had connected with the cities of the plain. The young man whistled, and then broke into a smile.

"My young friend," he remarked, "you are a very curious little fellow, to be sure, and wish a great many things which you will never get. Why, you would feel quite ashamed if you knew how the little fellows in these fairy cities of yours are all after the same sort of nonsense, and keep breaking their hearts to get up into the mountains. And let me tell you, those who go down into the plains are a very short while there before they wish themselves heartily back again. The air is not so light nor so pure; nor is the sun any brighter. As for the beautiful men and women, you would see many of them in rags, and many of them deformed with horrible disorders, and a city is so hard a place for people who are poor and sensitive that many choose to die by their own hand."

"You must think me very simple," answered Will. "Although I have never been out of this valley,

believe me, I have used my eyes. I know how one thing lives on another; for instance, how the fish hangs in the eddy to catch his fellows; and the shepherd, who makes so pretty a picture carrying home the lamb, is only carrying it home for dinner. I do not expect to find all things right in your cities. That is not what troubles me; it might have been that once upon a time; but although I live here always, I have asked many questions and learned a great deal in these last years, and certainly enough to cure me of my old fancies. But you would not have me die like a dog and not see all that is to be seen, and do all that a man can do, let it be good or evil? You would not have me spend all my days between this road here and the river, and not so much as make a motion to be up and live my life?—I would rather die out of hand," he cried, "than linger on as I am doing."

"Thousands of people," said the young man, "live and die like you, and are none the less happy."

"Ah!" said Will, "if there are thousands who would like, why should not one of them have my place?"

It was quite dark; there was a hanging lamp in the arbour which lit up the table and the faces of the speakers; and along the arch, the leaves upon the trellis stood out illuminated against the night sky, a pattern of transparent green upon a dusky purple. The fat young man rose, and, taking Will by the arm, led him out under the open heavens.

"Did you ever look at the stars?" he asked, pointing upwards.

"Often and often," answered Will.

"And do you know what they are?"

"I have fancied many things."

"They are worlds like ours," said the young man. "Some of them less; many of them a million times greater; and some of the least sparkles that you see are not only worlds but whole clusters of worlds turning about each other in the midst of space. We do not know what there may be in any of them; perhaps the answer to all our difficulties or the cure of all our sufferings: and yet we can never reach them; not all the skill of the craftiest of men can fit out a ship for the nearest of these our neighbours, nor would the life of the most aged suffice for such a journey. When a great battle has been lost or a dear friend is dead, when we are hipped or in high spirits, there they are, unweariedly shining overhead. We may stand down here, a whole army of us together, and shout until we break our hearts, and not a whisper reaches them. We may climb the highest mountain, and we are no nearer them. All we can do is to stand down here in the garden and take off our hats; the starshine lights upon our heads, and where mine is a little bald, I daresay you can see it glisten in the darkness. The mountain and the mouse. That is like to be all we shall ever have to do with Arcturus or Aldebaran. Can you apply a parable?" he added, laying his hand upon Will's shoulder. "It is not the same thing as a reason, but

usually vastly more convincing."

Will hung his head a little, and then raised it once more to heaven. The stars seemed to expand and emit a sharper brilliancy; and as he kept turning his eyes higher and higher, they seemed to increase in multitude under his gaze.

"I see," he said, turning to the young man. "We are in a rat-trap."

"Something of that size. Did you ever see a squirrel turning in a cage? and another squirrel sitting philosophically over his nuts? I needn't ask you which of them looked more of a fool."

#### THE PARSON'S MARJORY

After some years the old people died, both in one winter, very carefully tended by their adopted son, and very quietly mourned when they were gone. People who had heard of his roving fancies supposed he would hasten to sell the property, and go down the river to push his fortunes. But there was never any sign of such an intention on the part of Will. On the contrary, he had the inn set on a better footing, and hired a couple of servants to assist him in carrying it on; and there he settled down, a kind, talkative, inscrutable young man, six feet three in his stockings, with an iron constitution and a friendly voice. He soon began to take rank in the district as a bit of an oddity; it was not much to be wondered at from the first, for he was always full of notions, and kept calling the plainest common sense in question; but what most raised the report upon him was

the odd circumstance of his courtship with the parson's Marjory.

The parson's Marjory was a lass about nineteen, when Will would be about thirty; well enough looking, and much better educated than any other girl in that part of the country, as became her parentage. She held her head very high, and had already refused several offers of marriage with a grand air, which had got her hard names among the neighbours. For all that she was a good girl, and one that would have made any man well contented.

Will had never seen much of her; for although the church and parsonage were only two miles from his own door, he was never known to go there but on Sundays. It chanced, however, that the parsonage fell into disrepair, and had to be dismantled; and the parson and his daughter took lodgings for a month or so, on very much reduced terms, at Will's inn. Now, what with the inn, and the mill, and the old miller's savings, our friend was a man of substance; and besides that he had a name for good temper and shrewdness, which make a capital portion in marriage; and so it was currently gossiped, among their ill-wishers that the parson and his daughter had not chosen their temporary lodging with their eyes shut. Will was about the last man in the world to be cajoled or frightened into marriage. You had only to look into his eyes, limpid and still like pools of water, and yet with a sort of clear light that seemed to come from within, and you would understand at once that here was one who knew his own mind, and

would stand to it immovably. Marjory herself was no weakling by her looks, with strong, steady eyes and a resolute and quiet bearing. It might be a question whether she was not Will's match in steadfastness, after all, or which of them would rule the roast in marriage. But Marjory had never given it a thought, and accompanied her father with the most unshaken innocence and unconcern.

The season was still so early that Will's customers were few and far between; but the lilacs were already flowering, and the weather was so mild that the party took dinner under the trellis, with the noise of the river in their ears and the woods ringing about them with the songs of birds. Will soon began to take a particular pleasure in these dinners. The parson was rather a dull companion, with a habit of dozing at table; but nothing rude or cruel ever fell from his lips. And as for the parson's daughter, she suited her surroundings with the best grace imaginable; and whatever she said seemed so pat and pretty that Will conceived a great idea of her talents. He could see her face, as she leaned forward, against a background of rising pine woods; her eyes shone peaceably; the light lay around her hair like a kerchief; something that was hardly a smile rippled her pale cheeks, and Will could not contain himself from gazing on her in an agreeable dismay. She looked, even in her quietest moments, so complete in herself, and so quick with life down to her finger-tips and the very skirts of her dress, that the remainder of created things became no more

than a blot by comparison; and if Will glanced away from her to her surroundings, the trees looked inanimate and senseless, the clouds hung in heaven like dead things, and even the mountain tops were disenchanting. The whole valley could not compare in looks with this one girl.

Will was always observant in the society of his fellow-creatures; but his observation became almost painfully eager in the case of Marjory. He listened to all she uttered, and read her eyes, at the same time, for the unspoken commentary. Many kind, simple, and sincere speeches found an echo in his heart. He became conscious of a soul beautifully poised upon itself, nothing doubting, nothing desiring, clothed in peace. It was not possible to separate her thoughts from her appearance. The turn of her wrist, the still sound of her voice, the light in her eyes, the lines of her body, fell in tune with her grave and gentle words, like the accompaniment that sustains and harmonizes the voice of the singer. Her influence was one thing, not to be divided or discussed, only to be felt with gratitude and joy. To Will, her presence recalled something of his childhood, and the thought of her took its place in his mind beside that of dawn, of running water, and of the earliest violets and lilacs. It is the property of things seen for the first time, or for the first time after long, like the flowers in spring, to reawaken in us the sharp edge of sense and that impression of mystic strangeness which otherwise passes out of life with the coming of years; but the sight of a loved

face is what renews a man's character from the fountain upwards.

One day after dinner Will took a stroll among the firs; a grave beatitude possessed him from top to toe, and he kept smiling to himself and the landscape as he went. The river ran between the stepping-stones with a pretty wimple; a bird sang loudly in the wood; the hill-tops looked immeasurably high, and as he glanced at them from time to time, seemed to contemplate his movements with a beneficent but awful curiosity. His way took him to the eminence which overlooked the plain; and there he sat down upon a stone, and fell into deep and pleasant thought. The plain lay abroad with its cities and silver river; every thing was asleep, except a great eddy of birds which kept rising and falling and going round and round in the blue air. He repeated Marjory's name aloud, and the sound of it gratified his ear. He shut his eyes, and her image sprang up before him, quietly luminous and attended with good thoughts. The river might run for ever; the birds fly higher and higher till they touched the stars. He saw it was empty bustle after all; for here, without stirring a foot, waiting patiently in his own narrow valley, he also had attained the better sunlight.

The next day Will made a sort of declaration across the dinner-table, while the parson was filling his pipe.

"Miss Marjory," he said, "I never knew any one I liked so well as you. I am mostly a cold, unkindly

sort of man; not from want of heart, but out of strangeness in my way of thinking; and people seem far away from me. 'Tis as if there were a circle round me, which kept every one out but you; I can hear the others talking and laughing; but you come quite close.—Maybe this is disagreeable to you?" he asked.

Marjory made no answer.

"Speak up, girl," said the parson.

"Nay, now," returned Will, "I wouldn't press her, parson. I feel tongue-tied myself, who am not used to it; and she's a woman, and little more than a child, when all is said. But for my part, as far as I can understand what people mean by it, I fancy I must be what they call in love. I do not wish to be held as committing myself; for I may be wrong; but that is how I believe things are with me. And if Miss Marjory should feel any otherwise on her part, mayhap she would be so kind as shake her head."

Marjory was silent, and gave no sign that she had heard.

"How is that, parson?" asked Will.

"The girl must speak," replied the parson, laying down his pipe.—"Here's our neighbour, who says he loves you, Madge. Do you love him, ay or no?"

"I think I do," said Marjory faintly.

"Well then, that's all that could be wished!" cried Will heartily. And he took her hand across the table and held it a moment in both of his with

great satisfaction.

"You must marry," observed the parson, replacing his pipe in his mouth.

"Is that the right thing to do, think you?" demanded Will.

"It is indispensable," said the parson.

"Very well," replied the wooer.

Two or three days passed away with great delight to Will, although a bystander might scarce have found it out. He continued to take his meals opposite Marjory, and to talk with her and gaze upon her in her father's presence; but he made no attempt to see her alone, nor in any other way changed his conduct towards her from what it had been since the beginning. Perhaps the girl was a little disappointed, and perhaps not unjustly; and yet if it had been enough to be always in the thoughts of another person, and so pervade and alter his whole life, she might have been thoroughly contented. For she was never out of Will's mind for an instant. He sat over the stream, and watched the dust of the eddy, and the poised fish, and straining weeds; he wandered out alone into the purple even, with all the blackbirds piping round him in the wood; he rose early in the morning, and saw the sky turn from grey to gold, and the light leap upon the hill-tops; and all the while he kept wondering if he had never seen such things before, or how it was that they should look so different now. The sound of his own mill-wheel or of the wind among the trees, confounded and charmed his heart. The most en-

chanting thoughts presented themselves unbidden in his mind. He was so happy that he could not sleep at night, and so restless that he could hardly sit still out of her company. And yet it seemed as if he avoided her rather than sought her out.

One day, as he was coming home from a ramble, Will found Marjory in the garden picking flowers, and, as he came up with her, slackened his pace and continued walking by her side.

'You like flowers?' he said.

"Indeed I love them dearly," she replied. "Do you?"

"Why, no," said he, "not so much. They are a very small affair when all is done. I can fancy people caring for them greatly, but not doing as you are just now."

"How?" she asked, pausing and looking up at him.

"Plucking them," said he. "They are a deal better off where they are, and look a deal prettier, if you go to that."

"I wish to have them for my own," she answered, "to carry them near my heart, and keep them in my room. They tempt me when they grow here; they seem to say, 'Come and do something with us'; but once I have cut them and put them by, the charm is laid, and I can look at them with quite an easy heart."

"You wish to possess them," replied Will, "in order to think no more about them. It's a bit like killing the goose with the golden eggs. It's a bit

like what I wished to do when I was a boy. Because I had a fancy for looking out over the plain, I wished to go down there—where I couldn't look out over it any longer. Was not that fine reasoning? Dear, dear, if they only thought of it, all the world would do like me; and you would let your flowers alone, just as I stay up here in the mountains." Suddenly he broke off sharp. "By the Lord!" he cried. And when she asked him what was wrong, he turned the question off, and walked away into the house with rather a humorous expression of face.

He was silent at table; and after the night had fallen and the stars had come out overhead, he walked up and down for hours in the courtyard and garden with an uneven pace. There was still a light in the window of Marjory's room: one little oblong patch of orange in a world of dark blue hills and silver starlight. Will's mind ran a great deal on the window; but his thoughts were not very lover-like. "There she is in her room" he thought, "and there are the stars overhead:—a blessing upon both!" Both were good influences in his life; both soothed and braced him in his profound contentment with the world. And what more should he desire with either? The fat young man and his counsels were so present to his mind that he threw back his head and, putting his hands before his mouth, shouted aloud to the populous heavens. Whether from the position of his head or the sudden strain of the exertion, he seemed to see a momentary shock among the stars, and a diffusion of frosty light pass from one

to another along the sky. At the same instant, a corner of the blind was lifted and lowered again at once. He laughed a loud ho-ho! "One and another!" thought Will. "The stars tremble, and the blind goes up. Why, before Heaven, what a great magician I must be! Now if I were only a fool, should not I be in a pretty way?" And he went off to bed, chuckling to himself, "If I were only a fool!"

The next morning, pretty early, he saw her once more in the garden, and sought her out.

"I have been thinking about getting married," he began abruptly; "and after having turned it all over, I have made up my mind it's not worth while."

She turned upon him for a single moment; but his radiant, kindly appearance would, under the circumstances, have disconcerted an angel, and she looked down again upon the ground in silence. He could see her tremble.

"I hope you don't mind," he went on, a little taken aback. "You ought not. I have turned it all over, and upon my soul there's nothing in it. We should never be one whit nearer than we are just now, and, if I am a wise man, nothing like so happy."

"It is unnecessary to go round about with me," she said. "I very well remember that you refused to commit yourself; and now that I see you were mistaken, and in reality have never cared for me, I can only feel sad that I have been so far misled."

"I ask your pardon," said Will stoutly; "you do not understand my meaning. As to whether I

have ever loved you or not, I must leave that to others. But for one thing, my feeling is not changed; and for another, you may make it your boast that you have made my whole life and character something different from what they were. I mean what I say; no less. I do not think getting married is worth while. I would rather you went on living with your father, so that I could walk over and see you once, or maybe twice a week, as people go to church, and then we should both be all the happier between whiles. That's my notion. But I'll marry you if you will," he added.

"Do you know that you are insulting me?" she broke out.

"Not I, Marjory," he said; "if there is anything in a clear conscience, not I. I offer all my heart's best affection; you can take it or want it though I suspect it's beyond either your power or mine to change what has once been done, and set me fancy-free. I'll marry you, if you like; but I tell you again and again, it's not worth while, and we had best stay friends. Though I am a quiet man, I have noticed a heap of things in my life. Trust in me, and take things as I propose; or, if you don't like that, say the word, and I'll marry you out of hand."

There was a considerable pause, and Will, who began to feel uneasy, began to grow angry in consequence.

"It seems you are too proud to say your mind," he said. "Believe me that's a pity. A clean shrift makes simple living. Can a man be more down-

right or honourable to a woman than I have been? I have said my say, and given you your choice. Do you want me to marry you? or will you take my friendship, as I think best? or have you had enough of me for good? Speak out for the dear God's sake! You know your father told you a girl should speak her mind in these affairs."

She seemed to recover herself at that, turned without a word, walked rapidly through the garden, and disappeared into the house, leaving Will in some confusion as to the result. He walked up and down the garden, whistling softly to himself. Sometimes he stopped and contemplated the sky and hill-tops; sometimes he went down to the tail of the weir and sat there, looking foolishly in the water. All this dubiety and perturbation was so foreign to his nature and the life which he had resolutely chosen for himself, that he began to regret Marjory's arrival. "After all," he thought, "I was as happy as a man need be. I could come down here and watch my fishes all day long if I wanted: I was as settled and contented as my old mill."

Marjory came down to dinner, looking very trim and quiet; and no sooner were all three at table than she made her father a speech, with her eyes fixed upon her plate, but showing no other sign of embarrassment or distress.

"Father," she began, "Mr. Will and I have been talking things over. We see that we have each made a mistake about our feelings, and he has agreed, at my request, to give up all idea of marriage, and be

no more than my very good friend, as in the past. You see, there is no shadow of a quarrel, and indeed I hope we shall see a great deal of him in the future, for his visits will always be welcome in our house. Of course, father, you will know best, but perhaps we should do better to leave Mr. Will's house for the present. I believe, after what has passed, we should hardly be agreeable inmates for some days."

Will, who had commanded himself with difficulty from the first, broke out upon this into an inarticulate noise, and raised one hand with an appearance of real dismay, as if he were about to interfere and contradict. But she checked him at once, looking up at him with a swift glance and an angry flush upon her cheek.

"You will perhaps have the good grace," she said, "to let me explain these matters for myself."

Will was put entirely out of countenance by her expression and the ring of her voice. He held his peace, concluding that there were some things about this girl beyond his comprehension—in which he was exactly right.

The poor parson was quite crestfallen. He tried to prove that this was no more than a true lovers' tiff, which would pass off before night; and when he was dislodged from that position, he went on to argue that where there was no quarrel there could be no call for a separation; for the good man liked both his entertainment and his host. It was curious to see how the girl managed them, saying little all the time, and that very quietly, and yet

twisting them round her finger and insensibly leading them wherever she would by feminine tact and generalship. It scarcely seemed to have been her doing—it seemed as if things had merely so fallen out—that she and her father took their departure that same afternoon in a farm-cart, and went farther down the valley, to wait, until their own house was ready for them, in another hamlet. But Will had been observing closely, and was well aware of her dexterity and resolution. When he found himself alone he had a great many curious matters to turn over in his mind. He was very sad and solitary, to begin with. All the interest had gone out of his life, and he might look up at the stars as long as he pleased, he somehow failed to find support or consolation. And then he was in such a turmoil of spirit about Marjory. He had been puzzled and irritated at her behaviour, and yet he could not keep himself from admiring it. He thought he recognised a fine, perverse angel in that still soul which he had never hitherto suspected; and though he saw it was an influence that would fit but ill with his own life of artificial calm, he could not keep himself from ardently desiring to possess it. Like a man who has lived among shadows and now meets the sun, he was both pained and delighted.

As the days went forward he passed from one extreme to another; now pluming himself on the strength of his determination, now despising his timid and silly caution. The former was, perhaps, the true thought of his heart, and represented the

regular tenor of the man's reflections; but the latter burst forth from time to time with an unruly violence, and then he would forget all consideration, and go up and down his house and garden or walk among the fir-woods like one who is beside himself with remorse. To equable, steady-minded Will, this state of matters was intolerable; and he determined, at whatever cost, to bring it to an end. So, one warm summer afternoon, he put on his best clothes, took a thorn switch in his hand, and set out down the valley by the river. As soon as he had taken his determination, he had regained at a bound his customary peace of heart, and he enjoyed the bright weather and the variety of the scene without any admixture of alarm or unpleasant eagerness. It was nearly the same to him how the matter turned out. If she accepted him he would have to marry her this time, which perhaps was all for the best. If she refused him, he would have done his utmost, and might follow his own way in the future with an untroubled conscience. He hoped, on the whole, she would refuse him; and then, again, as he saw the brown roof which sheltered her, peeping through some willows at an angle of the stream, he was half inclined to reverse the wish, and more than half ashamed of himself for this infirmity of purpose.

Marjory seemed glad to see him, and gave him her hand without affectation or delay.

"I have been thinking about this marriage," he began.

"So have I," she answered. "And I respect you

more and more for a very wise man. You understood me better than I understood myself; and I am now quite certain that things are all for the best as they are."

"At the same time—" ventured Will.

"You must be tired," she interrupted. "Take a seat and let me fetch you a glass of wine. The afternoon is so warm; and I wish you not to be displeased with your visit. You must come quite often; once a week, if you can spare the time; I am always so glad to see my friends."

"Oh, very well," thought Will to himself. "It appears I was right after all." And he paid a very agreeable visit, walked home again in capital spirits, and gave himself no further concern about the matter.

For nearly three years Will and Marjory continued on these terms, seeing each other once or twice a week without any word of love between them; and for all that time I believe Will was nearly as happy as a man can be. He rather stinted himself the pleasure of seeing her; and he would often walk half-way over to the parsonage, and then back again, as if to whet his appetite. Indeed, there was one corner of the road, whence he could see the church-spire wedged into a crevice of the valley between sloping fir-woods, with a triangular snatch of plain by way of background, which he greatly affected as a place to sit and moralize in before returning homewards; and the peasants got so much into the habit of finding him there in the twilight that they gave

it the name of "Will o' the Mill's Corner."

At the end of the three years Marjory played him a sad trick by suddenly marrying somebody else. Will kept his countenance bravely, and merely remarked that, for as little as he knew of women, he had acted very prudently in not marrying her himself three years before. She plainly knew very little of her own mind, and, in spite of a deceptive manner, was as fickle and flighty as the rest of them. He had to congratulate himself on an escape, he said, and would take a higher opinion of his own wisdom in consequence. But at heart he was reasonably displeased, moped a good deal for a month or two, and fell away in flesh, to the astonishment of his serving-lads.

It was perhaps a year after this marriage that Will was awakened late one night by the sound of a horse galloping on the road, followed by precipitate knocking at the inn-door. He opened his window and saw a farm-servant, mounted and holding a led horse by the bridle, who told him to make what haste he could and go along with him; for Marjory was dying, and had sent urgently to fetch him to her bedside. Will was no horseman, and made so little speed upon the way that the poor young wife was very near the end before he arrived. But they had some minutes' talk in private, and he was present and wept very bitterly while she breathed her last.

#### DEATH

Year after year went away into nothing, with

great explosions and outcries in the cities on the plain: red revolt springing up and being suppressed in blood, battle swaying hither and thither, patient astronomers in observatory towers picking out and christening new stars, plays being performed in lighted theatres, people being carried into hospital on stretchers, and all the usual turmoil and agitation of men's lives in crowded centres. Up in Will's valley only the wind and seasons made an epoch; the fish hung in the swift stream, the birds circled overhead, the pine-tops rustled underneath the stars, the tall hills stood over all; and Will went to and fro, minding his wayside inn, until the snow began to thicken on his head. His heart was young and vigorous; and if his pulses kept a sober time, they still beat strong and steady in his wrists. He carried a ruddy stain on either cheek, like a ripe apple; he stooped a little, but his step was still firm; and his sinewy hands were reached out to all men with a friendly pressure. His face was covered with those wrinkles which are got in open air, and which, rightly looked at, are no more than a sort of permanent sunburning; such wrinkles heighten the stupidity of stupid faces; but to a person like Will, with his clear eyes and smiling mouth, only give another charm by testifying to a simple and easy life. His talk was full of wise sayings. He had a taste for other people; and other people had a taste for him. When the valley was full of tourists in the season, there were merry nights in Will's arbour; and his views, which seemed

whimsical to his neighbours, were often enough admired by learned people out of towns and colleges. Indeed, he had a very noble old age, and grew daily better known; so that his fame was heard of in the cities of the plain; and young men who had been summer travellers spoke together in cafés of Will o' the Mill and his rough philosophy. Many and many an invitation, you may be sure, he had; but nothing could tempt him from his upland valley. He would shake his head and smile over his tobacco-pipe with a deal of meaning. "You come too late," he would answer. "I am a dead man now: I have lived and died already. Fifty years ago you would have brought my heart into my mouth; and now you do not even tempt me. But that is the object of long living, that man should cease to care about life." And again: "There is only one difference between a long life and a good dinner: that, in the dinner, the sweets come last." Or once more: "When I was a boy I was a bit puzzled, and hardly knew whether it was myself or the world that was curious and worth looking into. Now, I know it is myself, and stick to that."

He never showed any symptom of frailty, but kept stalwart and firm to the last; but they say he grew less talkative towards the end, and would listen to other people by the hour in an amused and sympathetic silence. Only, when he did speak, it was more to the point, and more charged with old experience. He drank a bottle of wine gladly; above all, at sunset on the hill-top or quite late at

night under the stars in the harbour. The sight of something attractive and unattainable seasoned his enjoyment, he would say; and he professed he had lived long enough to admire a candle all the more when he could compare it with a planet.

One night, in his seventy-second year, he awoke in bed in such uneasiness of body and mind that he arose and dressed himself and went out to meditate in the harbour. It was pitch dark, without a star; the river was swollen, and the wet woods and meadows loaded the air with perfume. It had thundered during the day, and it promised more thunder for the morrow. A murky, stifling night for a man of seventy-two! Whether it was the weather or the wakefulness or some little touch of fever in his old limbs, Will's mind was besieged by tumultuous and crying memories. His boyhood, the night with the fat young man, the death of his adopted parents, the summer days with Marjory, and many of those small circumstances which seem nothing to another and are yet the very gist of a man's own life to himself—things seen, words heard, looks misconstrued—arose from their forgotten corners and usurped his attention. The dead themselves were with him, not merely taking part in this thin show of memory that defiled before his brain, but revisiting his bodily senses as they do in profound and vivid dreams. The fat young man leaned his elbows on the table opposite; Marjory came and went with an apronful of flowers between the garden and the harbour; he could hear the old

parson knocking out his pipe or blowing his resonant nose. The tide of his consciousness ebbed and flowed : he was sometimes half-asleep and drowned in his recollections of the past: and sometimes he was broad awake, wondering at himself. But about the middle of the night he was startled by the voice of the dead miller calling to him out of the house as he used to do on the arrival of custom. The hallucination was so perfect that Will sprang from his seat and stood listening for the summons to be repeated; and as he listened he became conscious of another noise besides the brawling of the river and the ringing in his feverish ears. It was like the stir of horses and the creaking of harness, as though a carriage with an impatient team had been brought up upon the road before the courtyard gate. At such an hour, upon this rough and dangerous pass, the supposition was no better than absurd; and Will dismissed it from his mind, and resumed his seat upon the arbour chair; and sleep closed over him again like running water. He was once again awakened by the dead miller's call, thinner and more spectral than before; and once again he heard the noise of an equipage upon the road. And so thrice and four times, the same dream, or the same fancy, presented itself to his senses : until at length, smiling to himself as when one humours a nervous child, he proceeded towards the gate to set his uncertainty at rest.

From the arbour to the gate was no great distance, and yet it took Will some time; it seemed as

if the dead thickened around him in the court, and crossed his path at every step. For, first, he was suddenly surprised by an overpowering sweetness of heliotropes; it was as if his garden had been planted with this flower from end to end, and the hot, damp night had drawn forth all their perfumes in a breath. Now the heliotrope had been Marjory's favourite flower, and since her death not one of them had ever been planted in Will's ground.

"I must be going crazy," he thought. "Poor Marjory and her heliotropes!"

And with that he raised his eyes towards the window that had once been hers. If he had been bewildered before, he was now almost terrified; for there was a light in the room; the window was an orange oblong as of yore; and the corner of the blind was lifted and let fall as on the night when he stood and shouted to the stars in his perplexity. The illusion only endured an instant; but it left him somewhat unmanned, rubbing his eyes and staring at the outline of the house and the black night behind it. While he thus stood, and it seemed as if he must have stood there quite a long time, there came a renewal of the noises on the road: and he turned in time to meet a stranger, who was advancing to meet him across the court. There was something like the outline of a great carriage discernible on the road behind the stranger, and, above that, a few black pine-tops, like so many plumes.

"Master Will?" asked the new-comer, in brief military fashion.

"That same, sir," answered Will. "Can I do anything to serve you?"

"I have heard you much spoken of, Master Will," returned the other; "much spoken of, and well. And though I have both hands full of business, I wish to drink a bottle of wine with you in your arbour. Before I go, I shall introduce myself."

Will led the way to the trellis, and got a lamp lighted and a bottle uncorked. He was not altogether unused to such complimentary interviews, and hoped little enough from this one, being schooled by many disappointments. A sort of cloud had settled on his wits and prevented him from remembering the strangeness of the hour. He moved like a person in his sleep; and it seemed as if the lamp caught fire and the bottle came uncorked with the facility of thought. Still, he had some curiosity about the appearance of his visitor, and tried in vain to turn the light into his face; either he handled the lamp clumsily, or there was a dimness over his eyes; but he could make out little more than a shadow at table with him. He stared and stared at this shadow, as he wiped out the glasses, and began to feel cold and strange about the heart. The silence weighed upon him, for he could hear nothing now, not even the river, but the drumming of his own arteries in his ears.

"Here's to you," said the stranger roughly.

"Here is my service, sir," replied Will, sipping his wine, which somehow tasted oddly.

"I understand you are a very positive fellow,"

pursued the stranger.

Will made answer with a smile of some satisfaction and a little nod.

"So am I," continued the other; "and it is the delight of my heart to tramp on people's corns. I will have nobody positive but myself; not one. I have crossed the whims, in my time, of kings and generals and great artists. And what would you say," he went on, "if I had come up here on purpose to cross yours?"

Will had it on his tongue to make a sharp rejoinder; but the politeness of an old innkeeper prevailed; and he held his peace and made answer with a civil gesture of the hand.

"I have," said the stranger. "And if I did not hold you in a particular esteem, I should make no words about the matter. It appears you pride yourself on staying where you are. You mean to stick by your inn. Now I mean you shall come for a turn with me in my barouche; and before this bottle's empty, so you shall."

"That would be an odd thing, to be sure," replied Will, with a chuckle. "Why, sir, I have grown here like an old oak-tree; the devil himself could hardly root me up: and for all I perceive you are a very entertaining old gentleman, I would wager you another bottle you lose your pains with me."

The dimness of Will's eyesight had been increasing all this while; but he was somehow conscious of a sharp and chilling scrutiny which irritated and yet overmastered him.

"You need not think," he broke out suddenly, in an explosive, febrile manner that startled and alarmed himself, "that I am a stay-at-home because I fear anything under God. God knows I am tired enough of it all; and when the time comes for a longer journey than ever you dream of, I reckon I shall find myself prepared."

The stranger emptied his glass and pushed it away from him. He looked down for a little, and then, leaning over the table, tapped Will three times upon the forearm with a single finger. "The time has come!" he said solemnly.

An ugly thrill spread from the spot he touched. The tones of his voice were dull and startling, and echoed strangely in Will's heart.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with some discomposure. "What do you mean?"

"Look at me, and you will find your eyesight swim. Raise your hand; it is dead-heavy. This is your last bottle of wine, Master Will, and your last night upon the earth."

"You are a doctor?" quavered Will.

"The best that ever was," replied the other; "for I cure both mind and body with the same prescription. I take away all pain and I forgive all sins; and where my patients have gone wrong in life, I smooth out all complications and set them free again upon their feet."

"I have no need of you," said Will.

"A time comes for all men, Master Will," replied the doctor, "when the helm is taken out of

their hands. For you, because you were prudent and quiet, it has been long of coming, and you have had long to discipline yourself for its reception. You have seen what is to be seen about your mill; you have sat close all your days like a hare in its form; but now that is at an end; and," added the doctor, getting on his feet, "you must arise and come with me."

"You are a strange physician," said Will, looking steadfastly upon his guest.

"I am a natural law," he replied, "and people call me Death."

"Why did you not tell me so at first?" cried Will. "I have been waiting for you these many years. Give me your hand, and welcome."

"Lean upon my arm," said the stranger, "for already your strength abates. Lean on me as heavily as you need; for though I am old, I am very strong. It is but three steps to my carriage, and there all your trouble ends. Why, Will," he added, "I have been yearning for you as if you were my own son; and of all the men that ever I came for in my long days, I have come for you most gladly. I am caustic, and sometimes offend people at first sight; but I am a good friend at heart to such as you."

"Since Marjory was taken," returned Will, "I declare before God you were the only friend I had to look for."

So the pair went arm-in-arm across the courtyard.

One of the servants awoke about this time and

heard the noise of horses pawing before he dropped asleep again; all down the valley that night there was a rushing as of a smooth and steady wind descending towards the plain; and when the world rose next morning, sure enough Will o' the Mill had gone at last upon his travels.



## V

## MARKHEIM

"Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the <sup>dark</sup> day-light streets, and his eyes had not yet grown <sup>accustomed</sup> familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside. The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas Day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my loss of time, when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions; but when a customer cannot look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then, changing to his usual business voice,

laughed  
closed  
with  
mouth

though still with a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tip-toe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

"Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from

me to be an obstacle.—Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he went on, "this hand-glass—fifteenth-century, warranted; comes from a good collection, too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

"A glass," he said hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly, "A glass? For Christmas? Surely not?"

"And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?"

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. "Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favoured," said he.

"I ask you," said Markheim, "for a Christmas present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience.

Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man?"

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other gloomily. "Not charitable? not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

"I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into a chuckle. "But I see this is a love-match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I," cried the dealer. "I in love! I never had the time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense.—Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. [We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let

us talk of each other : why should we wear this mask ? Let us be confidential. Who knows ?—we might become friends.”

“I have just one word to say to you,” said the dealer. “Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop !”

“True, true,” said Markheim. “Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else.”

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his greatcoat : he drew himself up and filled his lungs ; at the same time many different emotions were depicted together on his face—terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion ; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip his teeth looked out.

“This, perhaps, may suit,” observed the dealer : and then, as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded from behind upon his victim. The long, skewer-like dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow, as was becoming to their great age ; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then the passage of a lad’s feet heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of

his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and by that inconsiderable movement the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle and kept heaving like a sea: the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

From these fear-stricken roving Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay both humped and sprawling, incredibly small and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust. Markheim had feared to see it, and, lo! it was nothing. And yet, as he gazed, this bundle of old clothes and pool of blood began to find eloquent voices. There it must lie; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion—there it must lie till it was found. Found! ay, and then? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would ring over England, and fill the world with the echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead or not, this was still the enemy. ["Time was that when the brains were out," he thought; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

The thought was yet in his mind when, first one

and then another, with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home design, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. And still, as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him, with a sickening iteration, of the thousand faults of his design. He should have chosen a more quiet hour; he should have prepared an alibi; he should not have used a knife; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him; he should have been more bold, and killed the servant also; he should have done all things otherwise: poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless; to be the architect of the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk

like a hooked fish; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumour of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity; and now, in all the neighbouring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear—solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startlingly recalled from that tender exercise; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger: every degree and age and humour, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he could not move too softly; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell; and alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was tempted to stop the clocks. And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the place appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passer-by; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

But he was now so pulled about by different alarms, that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink

of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbour hearkening with white face beside his window, the passer-by arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at worst suspect, they could not know; through the brick walls and shuttered windows only sound could penetrate. But here, within the house, was he alone? He knew he was; he had watched the servant set forth sweethearting, in her poor best, "out for the day" written on every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of course; and yet, in the bulk of empty house above him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing—he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious, of some presence. Ay, surely: to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it; and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with; and again it was a shadow of himself; and yet again behold the image of the dead dealer, reinspired with cunning and hatred.

At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes. The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day blind with fog; and the light that filtered down to the ground story was exceedingly faint and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow?

Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop-door, accompanying his blows with shouts and rail-

eries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no ! he lay quite still; he was fled away far beyond ear-shot of these blows and shoutings; he was sunk beneath seas of silence; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking and departed.

Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to get forth from this accusing neighbourhood, to plunge into a bath of London multitudes, and to reach, on the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come: at any moment another might follow and be more obstinate. To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money, that was now Markheim's concern; and as a means to that, the keys.

He glanced over his shoulder at the open door; where the shadow was still lingering and shivering; and with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half-stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders and turned it on its back. It

was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been broken, fell into the oddest postures. The face was robbed of all expression; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair-day in a fishers' village : a grey day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, a blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad-singer; and a boy going to and fro, buried over-head in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great screen with pictures, dismally designed, garishly coloured : Brownrigg with her apprentice; the Mannings with their murdered guest; Weare in the death-grip of Thurtell; and a score besides of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion; he was once again that little boy; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt, at these vile pictures; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums. A bar of that day's music returned upon his memory; and at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations; looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realise the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of

sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger, arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain; he could rise to no more remorseful consciousness; the same heart which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime looked on its reality unmoved. At best, he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, one who had never lived and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor.

With that, shaking himself clear of these considerations, he found the keys and advanced towards the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly; and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by an incessant echoing, which filled the ear and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton's weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs; on the bright suit of armour posted, halbert in hand, upon the landing: and on the dark wood-carvings, and framed pictures that

hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim's ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving in the upper chambers; from the shop he heard the dead man getting to his legs; and as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him and followed stealthily behind. If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul ! And then again, and hearkening with ever fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresting sense which held the outposts and stood a trusty sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side, and on every side were half-rewarded as with the tail of something nameless vanishing. The four-and-twenty steps to the first floor were four-and-twenty agonies.

On that first storey, the doors stood ajar, three of them like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be sufficiently immured and fortified from men's

observing eyes; he longed to be home, girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes, and invisible to all but God. And at that thought he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scission in the continuity of man's experience, some wilful illegality of nature. He played a game of skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chess-board, should break the mould of their succession? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim: the solid walls might become transparent and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands and detain him in their clutch; ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him: if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim; or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against sin. But about God Himself he was at ease: his act was doubtless exceptional, but so were his excuses, which

God knew; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing-cases and incongruous furniture; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on a stage; many pictures, framed and unframed, standing with their faces to the wall; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of marquetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor; but by great good fortune the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbours. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing-case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for there were many; and it was irksome besides; for, after all, there might be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door—even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander, pleased to verify the good estate of his defences. But in truth he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were wakened to the music of a hymn, and the voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody! How fresh the youthful voices! Mark-

heim gave ear to it smilingly, as he sorted out the keys; and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images: church-going children and the pealing of the high organ; children afield, bathers by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky; and then, at another cadence of the hymn, back again to church, and the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall) and the painted Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the Ten Commandments in the chancel.

And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Fear held Markheim in a vice. What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

"Did you call me?" he asked pleasantly, and with that he entered the room and closed the door

behind him.

Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the new-comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

And yet the creature had a strange air of the commonplace, as he stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added: "You are looking for the money, I believe?" it was in the tones of everyday politeness.

Markheim made no answer.

"I should warn you," resumed the other, "that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences."

"You know me?" cried the murderer.

The visitor smiled. "You have long been a favourite of mine," he said; "and I have long observed and often sought to help you."

"What are you?" cried Markheim, "the devil?"

"What I may be," returned the other, "cannot affect the service I propose to render you."

"It can," cried Markheim; "it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet; thank God, you do not know me!"

"I know you," replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity, or rather firmness. "I know you to the soul."

"Know me!" cried Markheim. "Who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are better than this disguise that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different, they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known to me and God. But, had I the time, I could disclose myself."

"To me?" inquired the visitant.

"To you before all," returned the murderer. "I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts! Think of it; my acts! I was born and I have lived in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother—the giants of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But can you not look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any wilful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity—the unwilling sinner?"

"All this is very feelingly expressed," was the reply, "but it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies; the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the hoardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself was striding towards you through the Christmas streets! Shall I help you; I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?"

"For what price?" asked Markheim.

"I offer you the service for a Christmas gift," returned the other.

Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. "No," said he, "I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil."

"I have no objection to a death-bed repentance," observed the visitant.

"Because you disbelieve their efficacy!" Markheim cried.

"I do not say so," returned the other; "but I look on these things from a different side, and when the life is done my interest falls. The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under colour of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you

*Man is prepared to serve the devil for the sake of religion he is committing sin*

do, in a course of weak compliance with desire. Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service—to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers. I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board; and when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death-bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man's last words: and when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope."

"And do you, then, suppose me such a creature?" asked Markheim. "Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and sin, and, at the last, sneak into heaven? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind? or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? And is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?"

"Murder is to me no special category," replied the other. "All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and feeding on each other's lives. I follow sins beyond

the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence is death; and to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a ball, drips no less visibly with human gore than such a murderer as yourself. Do I say that I follow sins? I follow virtues also; they differ not by the thickness of a nail, they are both scythes for the reaping angel of Death. [Evil, for which I live, consists not in action but in character. The bad man is dear to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues.] And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because you are Markheim, that I offer to forward your escape."

"I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it I have learned many lessons; itself is a lesson, a momentous lesson. Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not; I was a bondsman to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations; mine was not so: I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free actor in the world; I begin to see myself all changed, these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past; something of what I have dreamed on

Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books, or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my life; I have wandered a few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

"You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think?" remarked the visitor; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands."

"Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

"This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor quietly.

"Ah, but I will keep back the half!" cried Markheim.

"That also you will lose," said the other.

The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well, then, what matter?" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost, say I am plunged again in poverty, shall one part of me, and that the worse, continue until the end to override the better? Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways. I do not love the one thing, I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms; and though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor; who knows their trials better than myself? I pity and help them; I prize love, I love honest laughter; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices only to direct my life, and my

virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind? Not so; good, also, is the spring of acts."

But the visitant raised his finger. "For six-and-thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, "through many changes of fortune and varieties of humour, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blenched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil?—five years from now I shall detect you in the fact! Downward, downward lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

"It is true," Markheim said huskily, "I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all: the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

"I will propound to you one simple question," said the other; "and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax; possibly you do right to be so; and at any account, it is the same with all men. But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein?"

"In any one?" repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair, "in none! I have gone down in all."

"Then," said the visitor, "content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down."

Markheim stood for a long while silent, and indeed it was the visitor who first broke the silence. "That being so," he said, "shall I show you the money?"

"And grace?" cried Markheim.

"Have you not tried it?" returned the other. "Two or three years ago, did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn?"

"It is true," said Markheim; "and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul; my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am."

At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the house; and the visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, changed at once in his demeanour.

"The maid!" he cried. "She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance—no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success! Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the

treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. "Up!" he cried; "up, friend; your life hangs trembling in the scales: up, and act!"

Markheim steadily regarded his counsellor. "If I be condemned to evil acts," he said, "there is still one door of freedom open—I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened and softened with a tender triumph, and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door and went downstairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance-medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but on the farther side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark. He paused in the passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into his mind, as he stood gazing. And

then the bell once more broke out into impatient clamour.

He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

"You had better go for the police," said he; "I have killed your master."

## VI

### AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS

"BOSWELL: We grow weary when idle.

"JOHNSON: That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company; but if we were all idle, there would be no growing weary: we should all entertain one another."

Just now, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence convicting them of *lèse-respectability*, to enter on some lucrative profession and labour therein with something not far short of enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savours a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be. Idleness so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognised in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and in the emphatic Americanism, "goes for" them.

And while such an one is ploughing<sup>distressfully</sup> up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment, when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow. ✓ Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes. Where was the glory of having taken Rome for these tumultuous barbarians, who poured into the Senate house, and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? ✓ It is a sore thing to have laboured along and scaled the arduous hilltops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement. Hence physicists condemn the unphysical; financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered; and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none.

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest. You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool. The greatest difficulty with most subjects is to do them well; therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favour of diligence; only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say. To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written a book of travels in Montenegro, is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond.

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words: "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things besides reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thought.

If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truantry that you regret; you would rather cancel some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still

remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability. I still remember that Emphyseus is not a disease, nor Stillicide a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education, which was the favourite school of Dickens and of Balzac, and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this : if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets, for if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket. And there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is ? We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one, and the conversation that should thereupon ensue:—

“How now, young fellow, what dost thou here ?”

“Truly, sir, I take mine ease.”

“Is not this the hour of the class ? and should'st thou not be plying thy Book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge ?”

“Nay, but thus also I follow after Learning, by your leave.”

"Learning, quotha ! After what fashion, I pray thee ? Is it mathematics ?"

"No, to be sure."

"Is it metaphysics ?"

"Nor that."

"Is it some language ?"

"Nay, it is no language."

"Is it a trade ?"

"Nor a trade neither."

"Why, then, what is't ?"

"Indeed, sir, as a time may soon come for me to go upon Pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest Sloughs and Thickets on the Road; as also, what manner of Staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn by root-of-heart a lesson which my master teaches me to call Peace, or Contentment."

Hereupon Mr. Worldly Wiseman was much commoved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatful countenance, broke forth upon this wise : "Learning, quotha !" said he; "I would have all such rogues scourged by the Hangman !"

And so he would go his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spreads its feathers.

Now, this, of Mr. Wiseman's, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by; or else you

are not inquiring at all, only lounging; and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope. Sainte-Beuve, as he grew older, came to regard all experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence; and it seemed all one to him whether you should read in Chapter xx, which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix, which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearing in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic vigils. There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science; but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a number of words, one-half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art: to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have "plied their book diligently" and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanour, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of life. Many make a large fortune, who remain under-bred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meanwhile there goes the idler, who began life

along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits; he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind; and if he has never read the great Book in very <sup>recondite</sup> places, he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns, for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and Art of Living? Nay; and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If he finds no out-of-the way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way takes him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Common-place Lane, and leads to the Belvedere of Commonsense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect; and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the Sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of Eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into

*lays its eye hand*  
ultimate silence and emptiness, but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape; many fire-lit parlours; good people laughing, drinking and making love as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution; and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of *coma*, which are not dedicated to furious *moiling* in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to

look at and no one to speak with; you would imagine they were paralysed or alienated; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes; when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls; but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuffbox empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway-carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business, is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most

virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the Theatre of Life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that Theatre, not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfil important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection; but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money; Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts; and yet they were better people to fall among than Mr. Barnes. And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabases whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to Northcote, who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends; for he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favour has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a

churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half-an-hour pleasantly, perhaps profitably, over an article of his; do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity? "Pleasures are more beneficial than duties because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest." There must always be two to a kiss, and there may be a score in a jest; but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favour is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. "There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy." By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set everyone he passed into a good humour: one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful child-

ren; I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. "A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five pound note." He or she is a radiating focus of goodwill; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition: they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorem of the Liveableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept; but thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused; and within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden ink-pot; or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's lives. They would be happier if he were dead. They could easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office, than they can tolerate his fractious

*These people  
must be  
managed*

spirits. He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scapegrace nephew, than daily hagridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives? That a man should publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full; and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of exceptional importance? Suppose Shakespeare had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, the world would have wagged on better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his book; and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase; for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in

*Vanities*

*Δ No individual has  
importance.*

themselves. Alas and alas ! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare ! And yet you see merchants who go and labour themselves into a great fortune and thence into the bankruptcy court; scribblers who keep scribbling at little articles until their temper is a cross to all who come about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid : and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centre-point of all the universe? And yet it is not so. The ends for which they give away their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful; the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent; and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought.

VII  
EL DORADO

It seems as if a great deal were attainable in a world where there are so many marriages and decisive battles, and where we all, at certain hours of the day, and with great gusto and despatch, stow a portion of victuals finally and irretrievably into the bag which contains us. And it would seem also, on a hasty view, that the attainment of as much as possible was the one goal of man's contentious life. And yet, as regards the spirit, this is but a semblance. We live in an ascending scale when we live happily, one thing leading to another in an endless series. There is always a new horizon for onward-looking men, and although we dwell on a small planet, immersed in petty business and not enduring beyond a brief period of years, we are so constituted that our hopes are inaccessible, like stars, and the term of hoping is prolonged until the term of life. To be truly happy is a question of how we begin and not of how we end, of what we want and not of what we have. An aspiration is a joy for ever, a possession as solid as a landed estate, a fortune which we can never exhaust and which gives us year by year a revenue of pleasurable activity. To have many of these is to be spiritually rich. Life is only a

ambition; desire of man to attain  
something higher. Man does not  
know his desire. This desire which  
renewal a his heart so

very dull and ill-directed theatre unless we have some interest in the piece; and to those who have neither art nor science, the world is a mere arrangement of colours, or a rough footway where they may very well break their shins. It is in virtue of his own desires and curiosities that any man continues to exist with even patience, that he is charmed by the look of things and people, and that he wakens every morning with a renewed appetite for work and pleasure. Desire and curiosity are the two eyes through which he sees the world in the most enchanted colours; it is they that make women beautiful or fossils interesting: and the man may squander his estate and come to beggary, but if he keeps these two amulets he is still rich in the possibilities of pleasure. Suppose he could take one meal so compact and comprehensive that he should never hunger any more; suppose him, at a glance, to take in all the features of the world and allay the desire for knowledge; suppose him to do the like in any province of experience—would not that man be in a poor way for amusement ever after?

One who goes touring on foot with a single volume in his knapsack reads with circumspection, pausing often to reflect, and often laying the book down to contemplate the landscape or the prints in the inn parlour; for he fears to come to an end of his entertainment, and be left companionless on the last stages of his journey. A young fellow recently finished the works of Thomas Carlyle, winding up, if we remember aright, with the ten note-books

upon Frederick the Great. "What!" cried the young fellow, in consternation, "is there no more Carlyle? Am I left to the daily papers?" A more celebrated instance is that of Alexander, who wept bitterly because he had no more worlds to subdue. And when Gibbon had finished the *Decline and Fall*, he had only a few moments of joy; and it was with a "sober melancholy" that he parted from his labours.

Happily we all shoot at the moon with ineffectual arrows; our hopes are set on inaccessible El Dorado; we come to an end of nothing here below. Interests are only plucked up to sow themselves again, like mustard. You would think, when the child was born, there would be an end to trouble; and yet it is only the beginning of fresh anxieties; and when you have seen it through its teething and its education, and at last its marriage, alas! it is only to have new fears, new quivering sensibilities, with every day; and the health of your children's children grows as touching a concern as that of your own. Again, when you have married your wife, you would think you were got upon a hilltop, and might begin to go downward by an easy slope. But you have only ended courting to begin marriage. *Falling in love and winning love are often difficult tasks to overbearing and rebellious spirits; but to keep in love is also a business of some importance, to which both man and wife must bring kindness and goodwill.* The true love story commences at the altar, when there lies before the married pair a most

beautiful contest of wisdom and generosity, and a life-long struggle towards an unattainable ideal. Unattainable? Ay, surely unattainable, from the very fact that they are two instead of one.

"Of making books there is no end," complained the Preacher; and did not perceive how highly he was praising letters as an occupation. There is no end, indeed, to making books or experiments, or to travel, or to gathering wealth. Problem gives rise to problem. We may study for ever, and we are never as learned as we would. We have never made a statue worthy of our dreams. And when we have discovered a continent, or crossed a chain of mountains, it is only to find another ocean or another plain upon the farther side. In the infinite universe there is room for our swiftest diligence and to spare. It is not like the works of Carlyle, which can be read to an end. Even in a corner if it, in a private park, or in the neighbourhood of a single hamlet, the weather and the seasons keep so deftly changing that although we walk there for a lifetime there will be always something new to startle and delight us.

There is only one wish realisable on the earth; only one thing that can be perfectly attained: Death. And from a variety of circumstances we have no one to tell us whether it be worth attaining.

A strange picture we make on our way to our Chimaeras, ceaselessly marching, grudging ourselves the time for rest; indefatigable, adventurous pioneers. It is true that we shall never reach the

goal; it is even more than probable that there is no such place; and if we lived for centuries and were endowed with the powers of a god, we should find ourselves not much nearer what we wanted at the end. **O** toiling hands of mortals! O unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither. Soon, soon, it seems to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hilltop, and but a little way farther, against the setting sun, descry the spires of El Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour. **3**

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## VIII

### A PLEA FOR GAS LAMPS

Cities given, the problem was to light them. How to conduct individual citizens about the burgess-warren, when once heaven had withdrawn its leading luminary? Or—since we live in a scientific age—when once our spinning planet has turned its back upon the sun? The moon, from time to time, was doubtless very helpful; the stars had a cheery look among the chimney-pots; and a cresset here and there, on church or citadel, produced a fine pictorial effect, and, in places where the ground lay unevenly, held out the right hand of conduct to the benighted. But sun, moon, and stars abstracted or concealed, the night-faring inhabitant had to fall back—we speak on the authority of old prints—upon stable lanthorns two storeys in height. Many holes, drilled in the conical turret-roof of this vagabond Pharos, let up spouts of dazzlement into the bearer's eyes; and as he paced forth in the ghostly darkness, carrying his own sun by a ring about his finger, day and night swung to and fro and up and down about his footsteps. Blackness haunted his path; he was beleagured by goblins as he went; and, curfew being struck, he found no light but

that he travelled in throughout the township.

Closely following on this epoch of migratory  
lanthorns in a world of extinction, came the era of  
oil-lights, hard to kindle, easy to extinguish, pale  
and wavering in the hour of their endurance.  
Rudely puffed the winds of heaven; roguishly clomb  
up the all-destructive urchin; and, lo ! in a moment  
night re-established her void empire, and the cit-  
groped along the wall, suppered but bedless, occult  
from guidance, and sorrily wading in the kennels.  
As if gamesome winds and gamesome youths were  
not sufficient, it was the habit to sling these feeble  
luminaries from house to house above the fairway.  
There, on invisible cordage, let them swing ! And  
suppose some crane-necked general to go speeding  
by on a tall charger, spurring the destiny of nations,  
red-hot in expedition, there would indubitably be  
some effusion of military blood, and oaths, and a  
certain crash of glass; and while the chieftain rode  
forward with a purple coxcomb, the street would  
be left to original darkness, unpiloted, unvoyage-  
able, a province of the desert night.

[The conservative, looking before and after,  
draws from each contemplation the matter for con-  
tent. Out of the age of gas lamps he glances back  
slightly at the mirk and glimmer in which his  
ancestors wandered; his heart waxes jocund at the  
contrast; nor do his lips refrain from a stave, in the  
highest style of poetry, lauding progress and the  
golden mean.] When gas first spread along a city,  
mapping it forth about evenfall for the eye of ob-

Feel about  
in the dark  
scurry  
timidly.

Homocent  
believe to be

servant birds, a new age had begun for sociality and corporate pleasure-seeking, and begun with proper circumstance, becoming its own birthright. ¶ The work of Prometheus had advanced by another stride. Mankind and its supper parties were no longer at the mercy of a few miles of sea-fog; sundown no longer emptied the promenade; and the day was lengthened out to every man's fancy. The city-folk had stars of their own; biddable, domesticated stars. ¶

It is true that these were not so steady, nor yet so clear, as their originals; nor indeed was their lustre so elegant as that of the best wax candles. But then the gas stars, being nearer at hand, were more practically efficacious than Jupiter himself. It is true, again, that they did not unfold their rays with the appropriate spontaneity of the planets, coming out along the firmament one after another, as the need arises. But the lamplighters took to their heels every evening, and ran with a good heart. It was pretty to see man thus emulating the punctuality of heaven's orbs, and though perfection was not absolutely reached, and now and then an individual may have been knocked on the head by the ladder of the flying functionary, yet people commended his zeal in a proverb and taught their children to say, "God bless the lamplighter!" And since his passage was a piece of the day's programme, the children were well pleased to repeat the benediction, not, of course, in so many words, which would have been improper, but in some chaste cir-

cumlocution, suitable for infant lips.

God bless him, indeed ! For the term of his twilight diligence is near at hand; and for not much longer shall we watch him speeding up the street and, at measured intervals, knocking another luminous hole into the dusk. The Greeks would have made a noble myth of such an one; how he distributed starlight, and, as soon as the need was over, re-collected it: and the little bull's eye, which was his instrument, and held enough fire to kindle a whole parish, would have been fitly commemorated in the legend. Now, like all heroic tasks, his labours draw towards apotheosis, and in the light of victory himself shall disappear. For another advance has been effected. Our tame stars are to come out in future, not one by one, but all in a body and at once. A sedate electrician somewhere in a back office touches a spring—and behold ! from one end to another of the city, from east to west, from the Alexandra to the Crystal Palace, there is light ! *Fiat Lux*, says the sedate electrician. What a spectacle, on some clear, dark nightfall, from the edge of Hampstead Hill, when in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the design of the monstrous city flashes into vision—a glittering hieroglyph many square miles in extent; and when, to borrow and debase an image, all the evening street lamps burst together into song ! Such is the spectacle of the future, preluded the other day by the experiment in Pall Mall. Star-rise by electricity, the most romantic flight of civilisation; the

A symbol used in the

compensatory benefit for, an innumerable array of factories and bankers' clerks. ↑ To the artistic spirit exercised about Thirlmere, here is a crumb of consolation; consolatory, at least, to such of them as look out upon the world through seeing eyes, and contentedly accept beauty where it comes. ↓

But the conservative, while lauding progress, is ever timid of innovation; his is the hand upheld to counsel pause; his is the signal advising slow advance. The word *electricity* now sounds the note of danger. In Paris, at the mouth of the Passage des Princes, in the place before the Opera portico, and in the Rue Drouot at the *Figaro* office, a new sort of urban star now shines out nightly, horrible, unearthly, obnoxious to the human eye; a lamp for a nightmare! Such a light as this should shine only on murders and public crime, or along the corridors of lunatic asylums, a horror to heighten horror. To look at it only once is to fall in love with gas, which gives a warm domestic radiance fit to eat by. ↑ Mankind, you would have thought, might have remained content with what Prometheus stole for them and not gone fishing the profound heaven with kites to catch and domesticate the wildfire of the storm. ↓ Yet here we have the levin brand at our doors, and it is proposed that we should henceforward take our walks abroad in the glare of permanent lightning. A man need not be very superstitious if he scruple to follow his pleasures by the light of the Terror that Flieth, nor very epicurean if he prefer to see the face of beauty

more becomingly displayed. That ugly blinding glare may not improperly advertise the home of slanderous *Figaro*, which is a backshop to the infernal regions; but where soft joys prevail, where people are convoked to pleasure and the philosopher looks on smiling and silent, where love and laughter and deifying wine abound, there, at least, let the old mild lustre shine upon the ways of man.

## IX

### AES TRIPLEX

The changes wrought by death are in themselves so sharp and final, and so terrible and melancholy in their consequences, that the thing stands alone in man's experience, and has no parallel upon earth. It outdoes all other accidents because it is the last of them. Sometimes it leaps suddenly upon its victims, like a Thug; sometimes it lays a regular siege and creeps upon their citadel during a score of years. And when the business is done, there is sore havoc made in other people's lives, and a pin knocked out by which many subsidiary friendships hung together. There are empty chairs, solitary walks, and single beds at night. Again, in taking away our friends, death does not take them away utterly, but leaves behind a mocking, tragical, and soon in-tolerable residue, which must be hurriedly concealed. Hence a whole chapter of sights and customs striking to the mind, from the pyramids of Egypt to the gibbets and dule trees of mediaeval Europe. The poorest persons have a bit of pageant going towards the tomb; memorial stones are set up over the least memorable; and, in order to preserve some show of respect

for what remains of our old loves and friendships, we must accompany it with much grimly ludicrous ceremonial, and the hired undertaker parades before the door. All this, and much more of the same sort, accompanied by the eloquence of poets, has gone a great way to put humanity in error; nay, in many philosophies the error has been embodied and laid down with every circumstance of logic; although in real life the bustle and swiftness, in leaving people little time to think, have not left them time enough to go dangerously wrong in practice.

As a matter of fact, although few things are spoken of with more fearful whisperings than this prospect of death, few have less influence on conduct under healthy circumstances. We have all heard of cities in South America built upon the side of fiery mountains, and how, even in this tremendous neighbourhood, the inhabitants are not a jot more impressed by the solemnity of mortal conditions than if they were delving gardens in the greenest corner of England. There are serenades and suppers and much gallantry among the myrtles overhead; and meanwhile the foundation shudders underfoot, the bowels of the mountain growl, and at any moment living ruin may leap sky-high into the moonlight, and tumble man and his merry making in the dust. In the eyes of very young people, and very dull old ones, there is something indescribably reckless and desperate in such a picture. It seems not credible that respectable married people, with umbrellas, should find appetite for a

bit of supper within quite a long distance of a fiery mountain; ordinary life begins to smell of high-handed debauch when it is carried on so close to a catastrophe; and even cheese and salad, it seems, could hardly be relished in such circumstances without something like a defiance of the Creator. It should be a place for nobody but hermits dwelling in prayer and maceration, or mere born-devils drowning care in a perpetual carouse.

And yet, when one comes to think upon it calmly, the situation of these South American citizens forms only a very pale figure for the state of ordinary mankind. This world itself, travelling blindly and swiftly in overcrowded space, among a million other worlds travelling blindly and swiftly in contrary directions, may very well come by a knock that would set it into explosion like a penny squib. And what, pathologically looked at, is the human body with all its organs, but a mere bagful of petards? The least of these is as dangerous to the whole economy as the ship's powder-magazine to the ship; and with every breath we breathe, and every meal we eat, we are putting one or more of them in peril. If we clung as devotedly as some philosophers pretend we do to the abstract idea of life, or were half as frightened as they make out we are, for the subversive accident that ends it all, the trumpets might sound by the hour and no one would follow them into battle—the blue-peter might fly at the truck, but who would climb into a sea-going ship? Think (if these philosophers

were right) with what a preparation of spirit we should affront the daily peril of the dinner-table: a deadlier spot than any battle-field in history, where the far greater proportion of our ancestors have miserably left their bones! What woman would ever be lured into marriage, so much more dangerous than the wildest sea? And what would it be to grow old? For, after a certain distance, every step we take in life we find the ice growing thinner below our feet, and all around us and behind us we see our contemporaries going through. By the time a man gets well into the seventies, his continued existence is a mere miracle; and when he lays his old bones in bed for the night, there is an overwhelming probability that he will never see the day. Do the old men mind it, as a matter of fact? Why, no. They were never merrier; they have their grog at night, and tell the raciest stories; they hear of the death of people about their own age, or even younger, not as if it was a grisly warning; but with a simple childlike pleasure at having outlived some one else; and when a draught might puff them out like a guttering candle, or a bit of a stumble shatter them like so much glass, their old hearts keep sound and unaffrighted, and they go on bubbling with laughter, through years of man's age compared to which the valley at Balaklava was as safe and peaceful as a village cricket green on Sunday. It may fairly be questioned (if we look to the peril only) whether it was a much more daring feat for Curtius to plunge into the gulf, than for

any old gentleman of ninety to doff his clothes and clamber into bed.

Indeed, it is a memorable subject for consideration, with what unconcern and gaiety mankind pricks on along the valley of the shadow of Death. The whole way is one wilderness of snares, and the end of it, for those who fear the last pinch, is irrevocable ruin. And yet we go spinning through it all, like a party for the Derby. Perhaps the reader remembers one of the humorous devices of the deified Caligula: how he encouraged a vast concourse of holiday-makers on to his bridge over Baiae bay; and when they were in the height of their enjoyment, turned loose the Praetorian guards among the company, and had them tossed into the sea. This is no bad miniature of the dealings of nature with the transitory race of man. Only, what a chequered picnic we have of it, even while it lasts! and into what great waters, not to be crossed by any swimmer, God's pale Praetorian throws us over in the end!

We live the time that a match flickers; we pop the cork of a ginger-beer bottle, and the earthquake swallows us on the instant. Is it not odd, is it not incongruous, is it not, in the highest sense of human speech, incredible, that we should think so highly of the ginger-beer, and regard so little the devouring earthquake? The love of Life and the fear of Death are two famous phrases that grow harder to understand the more we think about them. It is a well-known fact that an immense proportion

of boat accidents would never happen if people held the sheet in their hands instead of making it fast; and yet, unless it be some martinet of a professional mariner or some landsman with shattered nerves, every one of God's creatures makes it fast. A strange instance of man's unconcern and brazen boldness in the face of death!

We confound ourselves with metaphysical phrases, which we import into daily talk with noble inappropriateness. We have no idea of what death is, apart from its circumstances and some of its consequences to others; and although we have some experience of living, there is not a man on earth who has flown so high into abstraction as to have any practical guess at the meaning of the word *life*. All literature, from Job and Omar Khayyam to Thomas Carlyle or Walt Whitman, is but an attempt to look upon the human state with such largeness of view as shall enable us to rise from the consideration of living to the definition of life. And our sages give us about the best satisfaction in their power when they say that it is a vapour, or a show, or made out of the same stuff with dreams. Philosophy, in its more rigid sense, has been at the same work for ages; and after a myriad bald heads have wagged over the problem, and piles of words have been heaped one upon another into dry and cloudy volumes without end, philosophy has the honour of laying before us, with modest pride, her contribution towards the subject: that life is a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. Truly a fine

*Life is experience*

result ! A man may very well love beef, or hunting, or a woman; but surely, surely, not a Permanent Possibility of Sensation ! He may be afraid of a precipice, or a dentist, or a large enemy with a club, or even an undertaker's man; but not certainly of abstract death. We may trick with the word *life* in its dozen senses until we are weary of tricking; we may argue in terms of all the philosophies on earth, but one fact remains true throughout—that we do not love life, in the sense that we are greatly preoccupied about its conservation; that we do not, properly speaking, love life at all, but living. Into the views of the least careful there will enter some degree of providence; no man's eyes are fixed entirely on the passing hour; but although we have some anticipation of good health, good weather, wine, active employment, love, and self-approval, the sum of these anticipations does not amount to anything like a general view of life's possibilities and issues; nor are those who cherish them most vividly, at all the most scrupulous of their personal safety. To be deeply interested in the accidents of our existence, to enjoy keenly the mixed texture of human experience, rather leads a man to disregard precautions, and risk his neck against a straw. For surely the love of living is stronger in an Alpine climber roping over a peril, or a hunter riding merrily at a stiff fence, than in a creature who lives upon a diet and walks a measured distance in the interest of his constitution.

There is a great deal of very vile nonsense

talked upon both sides of the matter: tearing divines reducing life to the dimensions of a mere funeral procession, so short as to be hardly decent; and melancholy unbelievers yearning for the tomb as if it were a world too far away. Both sides must feel a little ashamed of their performances now and again when they draw in their chairs to dinner. Indeed, a good meal and a bottle of wine is an answer to most standard works upon the question. When a man's heart warms to his viands, he forgets a great deal of sophistry, and soars into a rosy zone of contemplation. Death may be knocking at the door, like the Commander's statue; we have something else in hand, thank God, and let him knock. Passing bells are ringing all the world over. All the world over, and every hour, some one is parting company with all his aches, and ecstasies. For us also the trap is laid. But we are so fond of life that we have no leisure to entertain the terror of death. It is a honeymoon with us all through, and none of the longest. Small blame to us if we give our whole hearts to this glowing bride of ours, to the appetites, to honour, to the hungry curiosity of the mind, to the pleasure of the eyes in nature, and the pride of our own nimble bodies.

We all of us appreciate the sensations; but as for caring about the Permanence of the Possibility, a man's head is generally very bald, and his senses very dull, before he comes to that. Whether we regard life as a lane leading to a dead wall—a mere bag's end, as the French say—or whether we think

*how*

*married couple*

of it as a vestibule or gymnasium, where we wait our turn and prepare our faculties for some more noble destiny, whether we thunder in a pulpit, or pule in little atheistic poetry-books, about its vanity and brevity; whether we look justly for years of health and vigour, or are about to mount into a bath-chair, as a step towards the hearse; in each and all of these views and situations there is but one conclusion possible, that a man should stop his ears against paralysing terror, and run the race that is set before him with a single mind. No one surely could have recoiled with more heartache and terror from the thought of death than our respected lexicographer; and yet we know how little it affected his conduct, how wisely and boldly he walked and in what a fresh and lively vein he spoke of life. Already an old man, he ventured on his Highland tour; and his heart, bound with triple brass, did not recoil before twenty-seven individual cups of tea. As courage and intelligence are the two qualities best worth a good man's cultivation, so it is the first part of intelligence to recognise our precarious estate in life, and the first part of courage to be not at all abashed before the fact. A frank and somewhat headlong carriage, not looking too anxiously before, not dallying in maudlin regret over the past, stamps the man who is well armoured for this world.

And not only well armoured for himself, but a good friend and a good citizen to boot. We do not go to cowards for tender dealing; there is

nothing so cruel as panic; the man who has least fear for his own carcase has most time to consider others. That eminent chemist who took his walks abroad in tin shoes, and subsisted wholly upon tepid milk, had all his work cut out for him in considerable dealings with his own digestion. So soon as prudence has begun to grow up in the brain, like a dismal fungus, it finds its first expression in a paralysis of generous acts. The victim begins to shrink spiritually; he develops a fancy for parlours with a regulated temperature, and takes his morality on the principle of tin shoes and tepid milk. The care of one important body or soul becomes so engrossing, that all the noises of the outer world begin to come thin and faint into the parlour with the regulated temperature; and the tin shoes go equably forward over blood and rain. To be otherwise is to ossify; and the scruple-monger ends by standing stockstill. Now the man who has his heart on his sleeve, and a good whirling weathercock of a brain, who reckons his life as a thing to be dashingly used and cheerfully hazarded, makes a very different acquaintance of the world, keeps all his pulses going true and fast, and gathers impetus as he runs; if he be running towards anything better than wildfire, he may shoot up and become a constellation in the end. Lord look after his health, Lord have a care for his soul, says he; and he has at the key of the position, and swashes through incongruity and peril towards his aim. Death is on all sides of him with pointed batteries, as he is

on all sides of all of us; unfortunate surprises gird him round; mim-mouthed friends and relations hold up their hands in quite a little elegiacal synod about his path: and what cares he for all this? Being a true lover of living, a fellow with something pushing and spontaneous in his inside, he must, like any other soldier in any other stirring, deadly warfare, push on at his best pace until he touch the goal. 'A peerage or Westminster Abbey!' cried Nelson in his bright, boyish, heroic manner. These are great incentives; not for any of these, but for the plain satisfaction of living, of being about their business in some sort or other, do the brave, serviceable men of every nation tread down the nettle danger, and pass flyingly over all the stumbling-blocks of prudence. Think of the heorism of Johnson, think of that superb indifference to mortal limitation that set him upon his dictionary, and carried him through triumphantly until the end! Who, if he were wisely considerate of things at large, would ever embark upon any work much more considerable than a halfpenny postcard? Who would project a serial novel, after Thackeray and Dickens had each fallen in mid-course? Who would find heart enough to begin to live, if he dallied with the consideration of death?

And, after all, what sorry and pitiful quibbling all this is! To forgo all the issues of living in a parlour with a regulated temperature—as if that were not to die a hundred times over, and, for ten years at a stretch! As if it were not to die in one's own life-

time, and without even the sad immunities of death! As if it were not to die, and yet be the patient spectators of our own pitiable change! The permanent possibility is preserved, but the sensations carefully held at arm's length, as if one kept a photographic plate in a dark chamber. It is better to lose health like a spendthrift than to waste it like a miser. It is better to live and be done with it than to die daily in the sick-room. By all means begin your folio; even if the doctor does not give you a year, even if he hesitates about a month, make one brave push and see what can be accomplished in a week. It is not only in finished undertakings that we ought to honour useful labour. A spirit goes out of the man who means execution, which outlives the most untimely ending. All who have meant good work with their whole hearts, have done good work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it. Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world, and bettered the tradition of mankind. And even if death catch people, like an open pitfall, and in mid-career, laying out vast projects, and planning monstrous foundations, flushed with hope, and their mouths full of boastful language, they should be at once tripped up and silenced; is there not something brave and spirited in such a termination? and does not life go down with a better grace, foaming in full body over a precipice, than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas? When the Greeks made their fine saying that those whom

the gods love die young, I cannot help believing they had this sort of death also in their eye. For surely, at whatever age it overtake the man, this is to die young. Death has not been suffered to take so much as an illusion from his heart. In the hot-fit of life, a tiptoe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound on to the other side. The noise of the mallet and chisel is scarcely quenched, the trumpets are hardly done blowing, when, trailing with him clouds of glory, this happy-starred, full-blooded spirit shoots into the spiritual land.

## X

### A CHRISTMAS SERMON

By the time this paper appears, I shall have been talking for twelve months; and it is thought I should take my leave in a formal and seasonable manner. Valedictory eloquence is rare, and death-bed sayings have not often hit the mark of the occasion. Charles Second, wit and sceptic, a man whose life had been one long lesson in human incredulity, an easy-going comrade, a manoeuvring king—remembered an embodied all his wit and scepticism along with more than his usual good humour in the famous “I am afraid, gentlemen, I am an unconscionable time a-dying.”

## I

An unconscionable time a-dying—there is the picture (“I am afraid, gentlemen,”) of your life and of mine. The sands run out, and the hours are “numbered and imputed,” and the days go by; and when the last of these finds us, we have been a long time dying, and what else? The very length is something, if we reach that hour of separation undishonoured; and to have lived at all is doubtless (in the soldierly expression) to have served. There

is a tale in Tacitus of how the veterans mutinied in the German wilderness; of how they mobbed Germanicus, clamouring to go home; and of how, seizing their general's hand, these old, war-worn exiles passed his finger along their toothless gums. *Sunt lacrymae rerum*: this was the most eloquent of the songs of Simeon. And when a man has lived to a fair age, he bears his marks of service. He may have never been remarked upon the breach at the head of the army; at least he shall have lost his teeth on the camp bread.

The idealism of serious people in this age of ours is of a noble character. It never seems to them that they have served enough; they have a fine impatience of their virtues. It were perhaps more modest to be singly thankful that we are no worse. It is not only our enemies, those desperate characters—it is we ourselves who know not what we do;—thence springs the glimmering hope that perhaps we do better than we think: that to scramble through this random business with hands reasonably clean, to have played the part of a man or woman with some reasonable fulness, to have often resisted the diabolic, and at the end to be still resisting it, is for the poor human soldier to have done right well. To ask to see some fruit of our endeavour is but a transcendental way of serving for reward; and what we take to be contempt of self is only greed of hire.

And again if we require so much of ourselves, shall we not require much of others? If we do not

genially judge our own deficiencies, is it not to be feared we shall be even stern to the trespasses of others? And he who (looking back upon his own life) can see no more than that he has been unconscionably long a-dying, will he not be tempted to think his neighbour unconscionably long of getting hanged? It is probable that nearly all who think of conduct at all, think of it too much; it is certain we all think too much of sin. We are not damned for doing wrong, but for not doing right; Christ would never hear of negative morality; *thou shalt* was ever His word, with which He superseded *thou shalt not*. To make our idea of morality centre on forbidden acts is to defile the imagination and to introduce into our judgments of our fellow-men a secret element of gusto. If a thing is wrong for us, we should not dwell upon the thought of it; or we shall soon dwell upon it with inverted pleasure. If we cannot drive it from our minds—one thing of two: either our creed is in the wrong and we must more indulgently remodel it; or else, if our morality be in the right, we are criminal lunatics and should place our persons in restraint. A mark of such unwholesomely divided minds is the passion for interference with others: the Fox without the Tail was of this breed, but had (if his biographer is to be trusted) a certain antique civility now out of date. A man may have a flaw, a weakness, that unfits him for the duties of life, that spoils his temper, that threatens his integrity, or that betrays him into cruelty. It has to be conquered; but it

must never be suffered to engross his thoughts. The true duties lie all upon the further side, and must be attended to with a whole mind so soon as this preliminary clearing of the decks has been effected. In order that he may be kind and honest, it may be needful he should become a total abstainer; let him become so then, and the next day let him forget the circumstance. Trying to be kind and honest will require all his thoughts; a mortified appetite is never a wise companion; in so far as he has had to mortify an appetite, he will still be the worse man; and of such an one a great deal of cheerfulness will be required in judging life, and a great deal of humility in judging others.

It may be argued again that dissatisfaction with our life's endeavour springs in some degree from dullness. We require higher tasks, because we do not recognise the height of those we have. Trying to be kind and honest seems an affair too simple and too inconsequential for gentlemen of our heroic mould; we had rather set ourselves to something bold, arduous, and conclusive; we had rather found a schism or suppress a heresy, cut off a hand or mortify an appetite. But the task before us, which is to co-endure with our existence, is rather one of microscopic fineness, and the heroism required is that of patience. There is no cutting of the Gordian knots of life; each must be smilingly unravelled.

To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall

be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends, but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with himself—here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy. He has an ambitious soul who would ask more; he has a hopeful spirit who should look in such an enterprise to be successful. There is indeed one element in human destiny that not blindness itself can controvert: whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed; failure is the fate allotted. \* It is so in every art and study; it is so above all in the continent art of living well. Here is a pleasant thought for the year's end or for the end of life: Only self-deception will be satisfied, and there need be no despair for the despairer.

## II

But Christmas is not only the mile-mark of another year, moving us to thoughts of self-examination: it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavours is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of the winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well he should be condemned to this fashion of the smiling face. Noble disappointment, noble self-denial, are not to be admired, not even to be pardoned, if they bring bitterness. It is one thing to enter the kingdom of heaven maim; another to maim yourself and stay

without. And the kingdom of heaven is of the childlike, of those who are easy to please, who love and who give pleasure. Mighty men of their hands, the smiters and the builders and the judges, have lived long and done sternly and yet preserved this lovely character; and among our carpet interests and twopenny concerns, the shame were indelible if we should lose it. Gentleness and cheerfulness, these come before all morality; they are the perfect duties. And it is the trouble with moral men that they have neither one nor other. 'It was the moral man, the Pharisee, whom Christ could not away with. If your morals make you dreary, depend upon it they are wrong. I do not say "give them up," for they may be all you have; but conceal them like a vice, lest they should spoil the lives of better and simpler people.

A strange temptation attends upon man: to keep his eye on pleasures, even when he will not share in them; to aim all his morals against them. This very year a lady (singular iconoclast!) proclaimed a crusade against dolls; and the racy sermon against lust is a feature of the age. I venture to call such moralists insincere. At any excess or perversion of a natural appetite, their lyre sounds of itself with relishing denunciations; but for all displays of the truly diabolic—envy, malice, the mean lie, the mean silence, the calumnious truth, the backbiter, the petty tyrant, the peevish poisoner of family life—their standard is quite different. These are wrong, they will admit, yet somehow not so

wrong; there is no zeal in their assault on them, no secret element of gusto warms up the sermon; it is for things not wrong in themselves that they reserve the choicest of their indignation. A man may naturally disclaim all moral kinship with the Reverend Mr. Zola or the hobgoblin old lady of the dolls; for these are gross and naked instances. And yet in each of us some similar element resides. The sight of a pleasure in which we cannot or else will not share moves us to a particular impatience. It may be because we are envious, or because we are sad, or because we dislike noise and romping—being so refined, or because—being so philosophic—we have an overweighing sense of life's gravity: at least, as we go on in years, we are all tempted to frown upon our neighbour's pleasures. People are nowadays so fond of resisting temptations; here is one to be resisted. They are fond of self-denial; here is a propensity that cannot be too peremptorily denied. There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbours good. One person I have to make good: myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may.

### III

Happiness and goodness, according to canting moralists, stand in the relation of effect and cause. There was never anything less proved or less probable: our happiness is never in our own hands; we inherit our constitution; we stand buffet among

friends and enemies; we may be so built as to feel a sneer or an aspersion with unusual keenness, and so circumstanced as to be unusually exposed to them; we may have nerves very sensitive to pain, and be afflicted with a disease very painful. Virtue will not help us, and it is not meant to help us. It is not even its own reward, except for the self-centred and—I had almost said—the unamiable. No man can pacify his conscience; if quiet be what he want, he shall do better to let that organ perish from disuse. And to avoid the penalties of the law, and the minor *capitis diminutio* of social ostracism, is an affair of wisdom—of cunning, if you will—and not of virtue.

In his own life, then, a man is not to expect happiness, only to profit by it gladly when it shall arise; he is on duty here; he knows not how or why, and does not need to know; he knows not for what hire, and must not ask. Somehow or other, though he does not know what goodness is, he must try to be good; somehow or other, though he cannot tell what will do it, he must try to give happiness to others. And no doubt there comes in here a frequent clash of duties. How far is he to make his neighbour happy? How far must he respect that smiling face, so easy to cloud, so hard to brighten again? And how far, on the other side, is he bound to be his brother's keeper and the prophet of his own morality? How far must he resent evil?

The difficulty is that we have little guidance; Christ's sayings on the point being hard to reconcile

with each other, and (the most of them) hard to accept. But the truth of His teaching would seem to be this: in our own person and fortune, we should be ready to accept and to pardon all; it is *our* cheek we are to turn, *our* coat that we are to give away to the man who has taken *our* cloak. But when another's face is buffeted, perhaps a little of the lion will become us best. That we are to suffer others to be injured, and stand by, is not conceivable, and surely not desirable. Revenge, says Bacon, is a kind of wild justice; its judgments at least are delivered by an insane judge; and in our own quarrel we can see nothing truly and do nothing wisely. But in the quarrel of our neighbour, let us be more bold. One person's happiness is as sacred as another's; when we cannot defend both, let us defend one with a stout heart. It is only in so far as we are doing this, that we have any right to interfere: the defence of B is our only ground of action against A. A has as good a right to go to the devil as we to go to glory; and neither knows what he does.

The truth is that all these interventions and denunciations and militant mongerings of moral half-truths, though they be sometimes needful, though they are often enjoyable, do yet belong to an inferior grade of duties. Ill-temper and envy and revenge find here an arsenal of pious disguises; this is the playground of inverted lusts. With a little more patience and a little less temper, a gentler and wiser method might be found in almost every case; and the knot that we cut by some fine heady

quarrel-scene in private life, or, in public affairs, by some denunciatory act against what we are pleased to call our neighbour's vices, might yet have been unwoven by the hand of sympathy.

## IV

To look back upon the past year, and see how little we have striven, and to what small purpose; and how often we have been cowardly and hung back, or temerarious and rushed unwisely in; and how every day and all day long we have transgressed the law of kindness;—it may seem a paradox, but in the bitterness of these discoveries a certain consolation resides. Life is not designed to minister to a man's vanity. He goes upon his long business most of the time with a hanging head, and all the time like a blind child. Full of rewards and pleasures as it is—so that to see the day break or the moon rise, or to meet a friend, or to hear the dinner-call when he is hungry, fills him with surprising joys—this world is yet for him no abiding city. Friendships fall through, health fails, weariness assails him; year after year he must thumb the hardly varying record of his own weakness and folly. It is a friendly process of detachment. When the time comes that he should go, there need be few illusions left about himself. *Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much* :—surely that may be his epitaph, of which he need not be ashamed. Nor will he complain at the summons which calls a defeated soldier from the field: defeated, ay, if he were Paul

or Marcus Aurelius!—but if there is still one inch of fight in his old spirit, undishonoured. The faith which sustained him in his lifelong blindness and lifelong disappointment will scarce even be required in this last formality of laying down his arms. Give him a march with his old bones; there, out of the glorious sun-coloured earth, out of the day and the dust and the ecstasy—there goes another Faithful Failure!

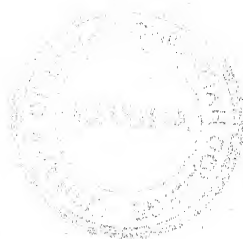
From a recent book of verse, where there is more than one such beautiful and manly poem, I take this memorial piece: it says better than I can, what I love to think; let it be our parting word:—

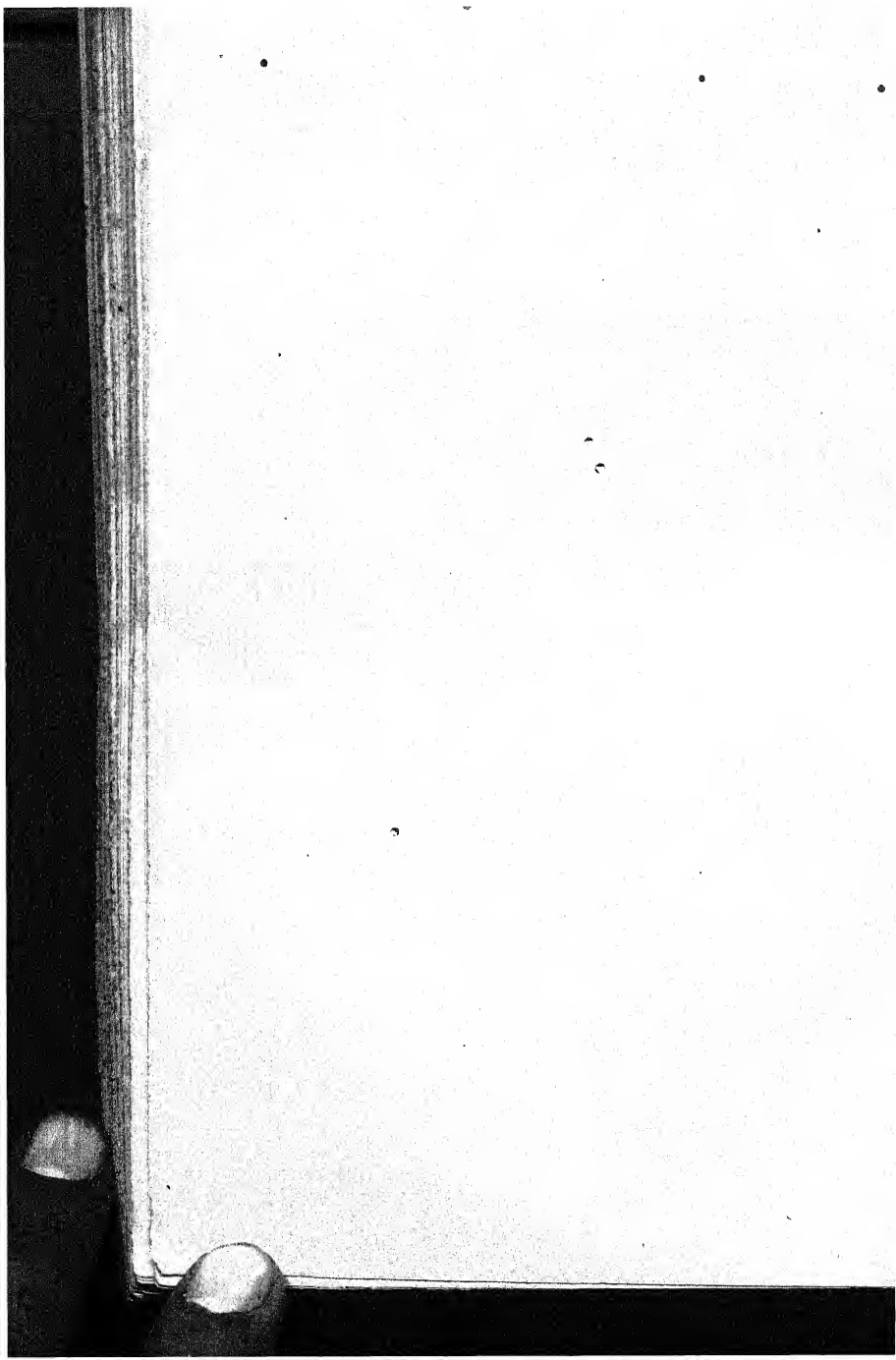
A late lark twitters from the quiet skies;  
And from the west,  
Where the sun, his day's work ended,  
Lingers as in content,  
There falls on the old, gray city,  
An influence luminous and serene,  
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends  
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires  
Shine, and are changed. In the valley  
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,  
Closing his benediction,  
Sinks, and the darkening air  
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—  
Night, with her train of stars  
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!  
My task accomplished and the long day done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,

Let me be gathered to the quiet west,  
The sundown splendid and serene,  
Death.





# I

## A COLLEGE MAGAZINE

What is included in our book is not the whole essay of this name, as published in Stevenson's volume *Memories and Portraits* (1887), but only the opening pages of it. The magazine referred to is the *Edinburgh University Magazine*, which he and some fellow-students at the University had started, and to which he had contributed articles.

In these pages we read of the way in which Stevenson trained himself to be a writer, and of the authors he imitated as models. *Books Which Have Influenced Me* is another essay dealing with the theme of Stevenson's literary apprenticeship.

### PAGE 50

*played the sedulous ape: 'diligently imitated'.*

*Hazlitt. . . . Obermann:* William Hazlitt (1778-1850) and Charles Lamb (1775-1834) are celebrated English essayists and critics; William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) are famous poets, the one English, the other French; Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682) is one of the greatest masters of English prose; Daniel Defoe (c. 1660-1731) is the author of *Robinson Crusoe* and other works of English fiction; Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64) is one of the early American novelists; and Obermann, as he is called after his great psychological romance of that name, is the French novelist, Etienne de Senancour (1770-1846).

## PAGE 51

*pasticcio*: A pasticcio (pronounced 'pastiitcho'), or more commonly now, pastiche (pronounced 'pasteesh'), is a composition made up of fragments pieced together, or copied with modifications from an original, in professed imitation of the style of another artist.

*save the mark!*: a shorter form of "God save the mark"; an apology for mentioning something horrible, shocking, or the like. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*:

"I saw the wound, I saw it with mine eyes—  
God save the mark!—here on his manly breast!"

Originally perhaps this was a formula for averting an evil omen, the "mark" being possibly an equivalent of 'sign' or 'omen'.

*'Sordello'*: a long, obscure poem by Robert Browning, published in 1840. It purports to be the story of "the development of a soul".

*Keats, Chaucer, and Morris*: All three are masters of narrative writing, whether prose or verse,—John Keats (1795-1821) as the author of *Isabella or The Pot of Basil*, Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400) as that of *The Canterbury Tales*, and William Morris (1834-1896) as that of *The Earthly Paradise*.

*Mr. Swinburne*: Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), poet and poetic dramatist. Perhaps Stevenson recalls him as the author of three romantic dramas on Mary, Queen of Scots.

*John Webster*: Elizabethan playwright (?1580-1625) of great tragic power. His two tragedies, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, come nearest to Shakespeare's.

*Congreve*: William Congreve (1670-1729) was the greatest writer of the prose Comedy of Manners, treating of the artificial world of fashion and gallantry. But probably Stevenson is thinking here of the author's only attempt at

tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, written in rhyming verse.

*Peebles*: situated on the River Tweed in southern Scotland and well known for its manufacture of tweeds.

"*The Book of Snobs*": One of William Makepeace Thackeray's best-known works, it describes the various types of English snobs.

*old Dumas*: Alexandre Dumas the elder (1802-1870), as distinguished from his son of the same name. His romantic novels include the widely popular, *The Three Musketeers*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo*—to give the English titles of these French books.

*one, strangely . . . actors*: the play *Deacon Brodie or The Double Life*, written in collaboration with W. H. Henley, in 1882.

#### PAGE 52

*ventriloquial efforts*: He calls his exercises in literary imitation ventriloquial, because they are rather like those of a ventriloquist, who speaks in such a way as to suggest that the voice comes from some other source than himself.

*a cast-back*: 'a throw back; a return'.

*Montaigne*: Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), the father of the modern essay. He has been called "the wisest Frenchman that ever lived" and was a favourite of Stevenson, who pays him a great tribute in his essay, *Books Which Have Influenced Me*.

*Cicero*: Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Roman orator and one of the masters of Latin prose. His essays, particularly those on Old Age, Friendship, and Duties, influenced Montaigne.

*Burns . . . letters*: Robert Burns (1789-1796), Scotland's national poet, was born in poverty and started life

as a farm labourer. His poetic genius had little chance of being developed by scholarship. He was a poet of elemental power; hence the phrase "prime force".

*Shakespeare . . . . school*: William Shakespeare (1564-1616), author of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and numerous other of the world's most widely known plays, wrote his earlier plays under the influence of Marlowe, Greene, Lyly and the other members of the group known as the University Wits. The word "school" is here used in the sense of a group of writers having certain characteristics in common.

## PAGE 53

*key . . . . scales*: Both are terms used in music; "key" may be rendered 'tone, style', and "scales" 'exercises'.

*Padding*: 'empty verbiage; more words than sense'.

## II

## A NIGHT AMONG THE PINES

A chapter from Stevenson's well-known book, *Travels with a Donkey* (published in 1879), recounting his adventures during a walking tour in Southern France. To ward off unwelcome curiosity he had pretended to be a seller of small wares. His only companion was his donkey, Modestine, laden with his sleeping bag.

Stevenson was fond of this chapter. He thought there was "some stuff in it in the way of writing". It is a delightful account of a night spent outdoors.

## PAGE 55

*drove-road*: rough track made by a drove or herd of cattle.

*"In a more . . . . haunted"*: See Milton's *Paradise Lost*, IV, 705ff:

"In shadier Bower  
More sacred and sequester'd, though but feign'd,  
Pan or Silvanus never slept, nor Nymph  
Nor Faunus haunted."

Nymphs and Fauns are classical semi-deities inhabiting woods, trees, etc.

## PAGE 56

*a kind of temporal death*: For people who sleep indoors sleep is a kind of death, a death in life or temporary death. Stevenson here uses the word "temporal" to convey both 'of this life', as opposed to 'spiritual', and 'temporary', as against 'eternal'.

*the stars . . . influence*: The word "influence" is here used in its original astrological sense of a flowing from the stars of an ethereal fluid affecting human character and destiny. The phrase, "rain influence", is perhaps an echo of Milton's words in *L'Allegro*: "store of ladies, whose bright eyes | Rain influence."

*arcana*: 'mysteries, secrets.'

## PAGE 57

*the Bastille of civilization*: The Bastille was the famous French prison stormed by the Paris mob during the Revolution (14th July 1789). Stevenson regards civilization as but a prison-house for man.

*aspersion*: 'shower, spray'. The word is today most commonly used in the sense of 'defamation, calumny', but Stevenson's use of it here echoes Shakespeare's in *The Tempest*, IV, i, 16: "No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall".

*the Milky Way*: a cluster of innumerable, very distant stars, visible as a milk-white band or belt in the sky; also known as the galaxy.

## PAGE 58

*congregated nightcaps*: 'huddled sleepers.' The image called up is that of a crowded dormitory, the "nightcaps" standing for the sleepers wearing them.

*nocturnal . . . . students*: 'the heroic labours of those who burn the midnight oil.' The word "clerks" here has the older sense of 'scholars'.

*of hot . . . . rooms*: The reference is to gay young men-about-town, who frequent theatres, night clubs and the like. A pass-key is a private key used to let oneself in quietly without attracting attention to oneself. The suggestion of furtiveness is sustained by "close doors", which suggests not merely closed doors, but also secret entrances.

*the fields . . . . open house*: To keep open house means to be hospitable to all comers; but here Stevenson seems to be using the phrase in a double sense, so as to suggest not only generous hospitality, but also hospitality in the open, unroofed hall of Nature which he later calls "my green caravanserai".

*I wished a companion . . . . touch*: When he wrote *Travels with a Donkey* Stevenson was already in love with the woman who was afterwards to become his wife.

*a fellowship . . . . perfect*: This is a reversal of the notion that, in Milton's words, "solitude sometimes is best society"; Stevenson maintains that the best society is as restful as perfect solitude. This echoes Cowper's lines:

"I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd,  
How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude!  
But grant me still a friend in my retreat,  
Whom I may whisper, solitude is sweet."

## PAGE 59

*lit internally with wine*: slightly drunk and therefore in high spirits. Compare the modern slang expression, "lit up", meaning 'slightly drunk'.

## PAGE 60

*green caravanseraï*: See the note on *the fields* . . . .  
*open house* on the preceding page.

## PAGE 61

*some rich* . . . . *drover*: Such a drover would be doubly undeserving: he would not need the money, nor would his niggardly or mean nature qualify him for it.

## III

## EPILOGUE TO 'AN INLAND VOYAGE'

*An Inland Voyage*, one of Stevenson's delightful travel books, was published in 1878 and was the fruit of a voyage by canoe through Belgium and France. Stevenson paddled one canoe, named the *Arethusa*, and his only companion, Sir Walter Grindlay Simpson, paddled another, named the *Cigarette*. Hence in this essay he constantly uses the names of their respective canoes for himself and his companion. This *Epilogue* appeared for the first time in the volume called *Across the Plains*, published in 1892. It is a fine example of Stevenson in one of his lighter moods.

## PAGE 62

*Charles of Orleans*: poet and soldier, (1391-1465), and the father of Louis III of France. He was captured by the English at the Battle of Agincourt (1415).

*roundels*: A roundel is a complex eleven-line verse-form with a refrain in the fourth and ninth lines. It is a variation of the French verse-form known as a *rondeau*. See Swinburne, *A Century of Roundels*.

*Mr. Lang*, *Mr. Dobson*, *Mr. Henley*: three contemporary men of letters: Andrew Lang (1844-1912), anthropologist and Greek scholar, many of whose poems are writ-

ten in the old French forms; Henry Austin Dobson (1840-1921), essayist and writer of light verse; and William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), poet, author of much miscellaneous work and friend of Stevenson, who refers to him frequently in his essays: see, e.g., the end of *A Christmas Sermon*.

*a volume of Michelet*: As we learn later this was an odd volume of history. Jules Michelet (1798-1874) was a French historian, whose best-known work is his *History of France*.

## PAGE 63

*Barbizon*: a village in the Forest of Fontainebleau, a few miles to the south of Paris. The home of many artists, it was bohemian rather than fashionable in its ways. See Stevenson's essay, *Fontainebleau*.

*the casino of Monte Carlo*: Monte Carlo, on the French Riviera, is a fashionable health resort, and its casino, or public hall, is a noted gambling centre.

*spindle shanks*: 'thin legs'.

*Villon*: François Villon (1431-c. 1463) was a poet and vagabond and lived a riotous life between the tavern and the prison. He is believed to have ended up as a member of a band of robbers. He wrote numerous rondeaux, and that is why Stevenson mentions him here.

*Roussillon*: in the extreme south of France.

*men in armour . . . . heaven*: Stevenson uses this image to describe the continuous roll of thunder.

## PAGE 64

*the wild bull's eye . . . . storm*: 'lightning'. For *bull's eye*, see the note on p. 234 below.

*halcyon eves*: 'peaceful evenings.' According to a Greek legend, the halcyon, or kingfisher, breeds on the sea,

which remains calm during its breeding season; hence the phrase, "halcyon days" meaning 'peaceful days.'

*estates*: 'states, conditions', a sense of the word found in earlier English and deliberately given to it here by Stevenson.

*Franco-Prussian war*: the war of 1870-71, during which Paris was besieged by the German Army and at the end of which the defeated French were obliged to cede Alsace-Lorraine to Germany.

*uhlans*: German cavalymen armed with lances.

## PAGE 65

*non . . . . . portraits*: 'no, you have some (indecent) photographs'.

*Voyons*: 'let us see'.

*recognized his drift*: 'realized what he was driving at; knew what he wanted'.

*pornographic colporteur*: 'hawker of obscene literature'. The use of "colporteur" here is peculiarly ironic, as the word is commonly applied to one employed by the Bible Society to sell Bibles.

*Non . . . . . pes bien*: 'No, it is not good on your part; oh no, it is not good.'

*another Chatillon*: Chatillon-sur-Loire, mentioned on page 66. The episode related in this essay took place there.

## PAGE 66

*department*: administrative district in France.

*O, pour vous*: 'O, for you'.

*a rabbinical fallow*: 'a stern taskmaster'. A rabbi is a Jewish authority on the law and the doctrines of Judaism.

## PAGE 67

*Childe Roland . . . . came*: The reference is to an old ballad in which Roland, a son of King Arthur, reaches and rescues his sister from the castle of the King of Elfland in which she has been imprisoned. ("Childe" means 'knight'. Cf. Spanish *infante*, 'prince'.) Shakespeare refers to this ballad in *King Lear*, III, iv, and Browning has a poem entitled, *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*.

*gendarme*: French policeman.

*Commissary*: French superintendent of police.

(*like Bardolph's*) *all whelks and bubuckles*: Bardolph is one of Falstaff's disreputable followers in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. The phrase used here is from a description of his face in *Henry V*, III, vi, III. Whelks are pimples, and bubuckles are swellings.

## PAGE 68

*home thrust*: 'pointed or effective argument'. A home thrust in fencing is a thrust that goes home or penetrates.

## PAGE 69

*version book*: an exercise book, like one kept for school translations or "versions" from English into Latin.

## PAGE 70

*'Pas de plaisanterie, monsieur'*: 'No joking, sir'.

*'Enfin, il faut en finir'*: 'Come, we must end this'.

*the plums*: 'the choicest remarks.'

## PAGE 71

*procès-verbal*: 'official report; record of proceedings'.

*at this eleventh hour*: 'at this late stage'. The phrase

goes back to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard in *St. Matthew*, xx, 1-16.

*not a cipher*: 'no code or secret writing (such as a spy would have on him)'.

*no 'voyo'u'*: 'not an urchin or loafer'.

## PAGE 72

*stuck to his colours*: 'refused to give in; would not retreat from the stand he had taken'. The metaphor is a military one, the colours being the flags carried by a regiment.

*the committed linnets . . . cavalier*: The reference is to these lines in *To Althea from Prison* by the cavalier poet, Colonel Lovelace (1618-58):

"When, like committed linnets, I  
With shriller throat shall sing".

Here "committed" means 'caged, committed to a cage'.

## PAGE 73

*To get . . . the stoic*: 'even a stoic (who is indifferent to pleasure and pain), when told to his face that he is a liar, is unable to pocket the insult.'

*telling the roll*: 'taking stock; adding up the number'.

## PAGE 74

*favourable to the muse*: 'encouraging one to artistic creation.' The Muses, in classical mythology, are the nine daughters of Zeus who preside over the various arts and sciences. The one that Stevenson doubtless has in mind here is the muse of lyrical poetry.

*Many a bitter bowl . . . partaken*: 'shared several unpleasant experiences'.

## PAGE 75

*in apple-pie order*: a phrase of unknown origin meaning 'in perfect order; absolutely correct'.

*beau cavalier*: 'fine gentleman'.

• '*Alors . . . . d'un baron*': 'Then, Monsieur, you are the son of a baron'. The Commissary jumps to the conclusion that a baronet must be the son of a baron.

*the soft impeachment*: 'the flattering accusation' (of being a baron's son). The phrase goes back to Sheridan's play, *The Rivals*, V, iii, where Mrs. Malaprop informs Sir Lucius O'Trigger: "I own the soft impeachment—pardon my blushes, I am Delia."

'*Alors . . . . . passeport*.' 'Then, this is not your passport'.

## PAGE 76

*cholera morbus*: In Latin *morbus* means 'disease'.

*pashas*: Turkish officers of the rank of military commanders, provincial governors, or the like. In those days Egypt was under Turkish rule.

*something Turkish*: The Commissary looked like a corrupt pasha, for he seemed to want the book to be given to him as a bribe.

'*Eh bien . . . . camarade*': 'O well, I suppose I should release your comrade'.

*many works . . . . Alexandria*: The reference is to the burning by Julius Caesar of the largest library of the ancient world, founded in the 4th century B. C. at Alexandria, the ancient capital of Egypt.

*many . . . . . British Museum*: The library of the British Museum, in London, is one of the finest in the world.

## PAGE 77

*'Vous etes libre'* : 'You are free'.

*Maréchal-des-logis*: Sergeant-major (in the cavalry).

## PAGE 78

*tasting . . . . matador* : 'enjoying teasing me as a Spanish bull-fighter teases a bull before killing it.'

*conclamantly*: a little-used but expressive word, meaning 'loudly and all at the same time.'

*the smallness of their bags*: 'how little was the game they had been able to kill.'

*were greedy of consideration*: 'were eager to be taken notice of'.

*befrogged* : ornamented with military coat-fastenings, called frogs, consisting of spindle-shaped buttons that fit into loops on the other side of the coat.

## PAGE 79

*'Suives!'* : 'Follow!'

*The arrest of the members*: This was when, in 1642, King Charles I sought to arrest Hampden, Pym and three other Members of Parliament.

*the oath of the Tennis Court*: This was on the 20th June 1789, just before the French Revolution broke out. The representatives of the people, finding the Great Hall of the Palace of Versailles closed to them, assembled on the adjoining tennis court and vowed that they would not disband till they, acting as the Constituent Assembly, had framed a constitution for France.

*the . . . . independence*: by the American Colonists, on the 4th July 1776, to proclaim themselves free and independent States no longer subject to British rule.

*Mark Antony's oration*: addressed to the citizens of

Rome over the body of the murdered Caesar; see Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, III, ii.

*wash your . . . . responsibility*: 'have nothing more to do with the matter'. Cf. *St. Matthew*, xxvii, 24, where it is said that the Roman governor, Pilate, finding that there was no evil in Christ, whom the priests were accusing before him, "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."

#### IV

#### WILL O' THE MILL

Written in 1877 and published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in the following year, this delicate allegory exhibits the delights and the dangers of living a life of profound contentment and extreme prudence. Stevenson's personal philosophy, as expounded in essay after essay of his, is diametrically opposed to the philosophy of hanging back from life followed by Will in this story. Indeed, he told Graham Balfour, his biographer, that he wrote this story "as an experiment in order to see what could be said in support of the opposite theory." In these circumstances it was inevitable that in spite of every attempt to portray a character like Will with the utmost sympathy, Stevenson should have succeeded only in exhibiting Will as, on the whole, not an example to be imitated, but a warning.

The charming old-world atmosphere, perfectly adapted to the flowering of the calm, sober personality of Will, is sustained throughout by the deliberately quaint and archaic idiom in which the story is told.

#### PAGE 82

*the coil of battle*: the word "coil" is an archaic one meaning 'noise', as in Shakespeare's "What a coil is there!"

(*Comedy of Errors*) and "this mortal coil" (*Hamlet*), meaning 'the bustle or turmoil of this mortal life'.

*tumbril*: two-wheeled covered cart used for carrying ammunition and military supplies.

## PAGE 83

*barouches*: A barouche is a four-wheeled carriage with a collapsible half-head.

*the fall*: a good old English term for 'autumn', still in common use in America.

*a power of mills*: The old miller is very appropriately made to use "a power", as uneducated people often do, for 'a great number'.

## PAGE 84

*one old serpent. . . . head*: Belief in strange sea-monsters is widely current among the illiterate, and from time to time the newspapers carry fantastic accounts of their having been sighted by seamen.

## PAGE 86

*rumour*: 'noise, din'. This is an archaic use of the word; compare Longfellow's "a great rumour of trumpets and horses".

*The tribes. . . . East*: The allusion here is to the great migrations of the Germanic peoples during the fifth century, when the Ostrogoths overran Italy and sacked Rome, the Franks established themselves in what is modern France, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes conquered Britain, and the Vandals and Visigoths swept over Spain and North Africa.

*the eternal city*: Rome. The phrase is traceable to Virgil's *Aeneid* (i, 29), where Jupiter promises the Romans an eternal empire.

*spread wings with Icarus*: According to Greek mytho-

logy, Icarus attempted to fly with wings made of wax, but the wings melted with the heat of the sun and he fell into that part of the Aegean Sea known to this day as the Icarian Sea.

*sent Columbus. . . . Atlantic:* When the Genoese navigator, Christopher Columbus (c. 1445-1506), set out on the voyages that led to the discovery of the New World, he was out to reach Asia by a new route and imagined that the lands he discovered were the borders of Asia.

*"To the Eternal City":* The barbarians of course meant Rome, but to the old man the Eternal City is the ideal city of his dreams and, therefore, ever unattainable.

PAGE 87

*he lay. . . . sick for home:* an echo of the famous reference to Ruth in Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*:

'Ruth, when sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn."

As for "lay", it means 'lodged, lived', as in Shakespearean and earlier English.

*the high-flying vice. . . . sunshine:* 'the shameless debauchery of those who move in high society.'

*lusting with his eyes:* 'eager to see all that is worth seeing'. The word "lust" in earlier English suggested only strong desire, without any taint of impropriety or sinfulness; and Stevenson is using it in this archaic sense.

PAGE 89

*Night after night. . . . dream:* Note the superlative skill with which Stevenson is preparing the reader for the mysterious appearance of the stranger and the great carriage at the end of the story.

PAGE 92

*hipped:* 'dejected; in low spirits.'

*the mountain. . . . mouse:* The allusion is to the line of the Latin poet Horace to the effect that the mountain was in labour and brought forth an insignificant mouse. All our efforts to communicate with the stars achieve little or nothing; they are a mountain of effort resulting in a mouse of effect and are doomed to be fruitless.

*Arcturus or Aldebaran:* The stars named here are both stars of the first magnitude, the one bright yellow, the other bright red.

## PAGE 95

*rule the roost:* 'be master.' The phrase goes back to the fifteenth century. Its origin is obscure but it may have arisen from the fact that the head of the family carved the roast meat at table. It is also sometimes found as "rule the roost", where, perhaps, "roost" is only an earlier form of "roast".

*kerchief:* cloth used as a head covering.

*agreeable dismay:* Like "solemn glee" on page 60, this is an oxymoron or an arresting conjunction of words that seemingly cancel each other. Stevenson employs this figure of speech fairly frequently.

*quick with life:* The original sense of the word "quick" is 'living', as in the biblical phrase, "the quick and the dead." In our phrase the word is equivalent to 'throbbing', 'pulsating'.

## PAGE 96

*that impression. . . . years:* Compare Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, especially the lines:

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy".

## PAGE 97

*wimple:* A river is said to wimple when it twists and turns or, as here, when it ripples.

*the better sunlight:* 'the greater happiness of love'.

## PAGE 99

*the dust of the eddy:* 'the swirling of the water'. The word "dust" here stands figuratively for 'disturbance, turmoil', as in the phrase "to raise a dust".

*killing the goose. . . eggs:* The allusion is to the ancient Greek fable of the greedy countryman who killed the goose that laid the golden eggs; he hoped thereby to get the whole stock of eggs at once, but succeeded only in losing even the egg a day he was getting.

## PAGE 103

*set me fancy-free:* 'make me feel that I'm no longer in love'. The use of "fancy-free" recalls Shakespeare's "In maiden meditation, fancy free" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), referring to Queen Elizabeth, the heart-whole Virgin Queen.

*a clean shrift:* 'a full, unreserved confession'. The word "shrift" is no longer used for 'confession' except in the phrase "to give short shrift", meaning literally, 'to allow little time for a confession'.

## PAGE 105

*a true lovers' tiff:* The word "tiff" is colloquial for 'quarrel'.

## PAGE 111

*old experience:* 'the experience of years'. Cf. Milton's lines:

"Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain."

(*II Penseroso*)

## PAGE 113

*the brawling of the river:* The word "brawling" ordi-

narilly means 'noisy quarrelling, wrangling'; here it stands for the angry roar of a torrent.

## PAGE 114

*a few . . . plumes:* The mention of plumes is deliberate; for plumes are associated with funerals. Cf. "a hearse with white plumes upon it" in *An Apology for Idlers*, and Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*, II, iv: "A funeral, with plumes and lights and music."

## PAGE 116

*tramp on people's corns:* 'irritate or annoy people by opposing their pet opinions or habits'. The corns or horny growth on the feet are very sensitive; hence the phrase, which is more usually "to tread on one's corns".

## PAGE 118

*like a hare in its form:* The word "form" here stands for the hole in which a hare crouches. Cf. Chaucer's line: "As in a form sitteth a very hare." (*The Shipman's Tale*, 104).

## V

## MARKHEIM

This story, written in 1884 and published in the following year, is an allegory of the soul's struggle with evil. Its central character is a sinner who is not fully conscious of his sinfulness. To that extent there is a remnant of good in him, and when it is brought home to him that he has only been hugging an illusion in believing that his heart is white even while his hands are red with blood—a murderer's hands—the better side of him triumphs over the worse and he decides to lose his life and save his soul.

Markheim is a much more complex personality than Will o' the Mill, and it will be observed that the setting and style of the story reflect this complexity of his nature. The setting is a curio-dealer's shop, crowded with miscellaneous curios and antiques, the shop itself being in the heart of crowded London; and the style is of a more closely-woven texture.

## PAGE 120

*our windfalls. . . kinds:* A windfall is an unexpected piece of good fortune; literally, it is fruit blown down from a tree and therefore unexpectedly available.

*balancing my books:* 'making the necessary entries in my account-books to equalize debits and credits.'

## PAGE 121

*bare to the wainscot:* 'entirely empty'. A wainscot is a wooden panelling or lining of a wall or cupboard.

## PAGE 122

*pretty hard-favoured:* 'rather ugly'. An archaic sense of "favour" is 'looks, countenance'. Cf. Shakespeare's "ill-favoured", meaning 'uncomely, ugly', in "An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own." (*As You Like It*, V, iv).

## PAGE 123

*a very charitable man:* The word "charitable" is here used in the sense of 'inclined to take a favourable view of persons and situations.' Markheim implies that the dealer's motive in offering him the hand-mirror was a kind, helpful one.

## PAGE 125

*he looked. . . awfully:* Here "awfully" has the full original force of 'filled with awe'.

*noiseless bustle:* See note on *agreeable dismay* on page 213 above.

*that leaguer of shadows*: The word "leaguer", meaning 'besieging force', is no longer in common use.

*'Time was. . . were out'*: The reference is to *Macbeth*, III iv. 77ff:

"The time has been  
That when the brains were out, the man would die,  
And there an end."

## PAGE 126

*prepared an alibi*: An alibi is a plea that when an alleged act was committed one was elsewhere. The word is Latin for 'elsewhere'.

## PAGE 127

*weaving the. . . hang him*: by obtaining the evidence that would succeed in sending him to the gallows.

## PAGE 128

*set forth sweethearting*: 'gone out to meet her lover'.

## PAGE 130

*the blare of brasses*: 'the sound of the brass instruments in the band'.

*Brownrigg with her apprentice*: Elizabeth Brownrigg was a London midwife who brutally murdered her apprentice; she was hanged for the crime in 1767.

*the Mannings. . . guest*: Frederick Manning, publican, and his wife, Marie, murdered a guest, O'Connor by name, at their public-house, in 1849. They were both convicted and executed in the same year.

*Weare. . . Thurtall*: John Thurtall, son of the mayor of Warwick, was a prize-fighter and gambler. Having lost money to William Weare, he and an accomplice waylaid the poor man on the St. Albans Road. This was in 1823.

In spite of a spirited speech in his own defence, he was hanged in the following year.

## PAGE 133

*the defeated. . . chessboard:* There is a story to the effect that once, when Canute, King of England (died 1035), was playing chess with one of his noblemen, a quarrel arose and the nobleman upset the board and, as a consequence, was murdered in church a few days later by Canute's orders. But Stevenson may not be referring to this legend, in which it is not the tyrant who overthrows the board.

*the like. . . Napoleon:* The allusion is to Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign in 1812. The winter that year set in earlier than expected and he had to retreat ignominiously.

## PAGE 134

*a fine Sheraton. . . marquetry:* Thomas Sheraton (1751-1806) was a famous furniture maker and designer. His furniture was characterized by elegance and an extensive use of marquetry, that is, inlay of pieces of wood of different colours, or grains, so as to make a pattern.

*time was on the wing:* Cf. Fitzgerald's *Rubayat of Omar Khayam*:

"The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing".

## PAGE 135

*church-going. . . high organ:* An echo of Milton's lines in *Il Penseroso*:

"Then let the pealing organ blow  
To the full-voiced quire below  
In service high and anthems clear."

*Jacobean tombs:* that is, of the architectural style

that prevailed in the early part of the seventeenth century. James I was King of England from 1603 to 1625 and "Jacobean" means 'of the times of, or relating to, James'.

*the dim. . . chancel:* The Ten Commandments were, according to the Bible story, those given by God to Moses and the Jews: see *Exodus*, chap. xx. The chancel, on the wall of which these Commandments are inscribed, is the eastern part of a church, reserved for the clergy, choir, etc.

## PAGE 138

*to sow tares. . . . wheat-field:* 'to introduce an evil element into a good community'. A tare is a species of weed, and the allusion is to the *Gospel of St. Matthew* xiii, 24, 25: "The kingdom of God is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

## PAGE 141

*Sabbath evenings:* The Jewish Sabbath or Day of Rest is Saturday, the last day of the week, on which God Himself is said to have rested after finishing the work of creation in six days (see *Genesis*, ii, 2). But the Christian Sabbath, ever since the Reformation, is Sunday, 'the Lord's Day' in commemoration of Christ's resurrection on that day.

## PAGE 143

*revival meetings:* meetings organized with a view to reawakening religious fervour among those who attend them.

## PAGE 144

*dislimned:* 'were effaced; vanished.'

## VI

## AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS

This is one of the best-known of Stevenson's essays. Being "known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler", as he tells us in *A College Magazine*, he characterized this essay in a letter to Mrs. Sitwell as "really a defence of R.L.S." But it should be apparent to every reader of *A College Magazine* that he was an idler only in the special sense in which he defines the word in this apology.

For sentiments parallel to some of those expressed here one may turn to Hazlitt's essay *On the Ignorance of the Learned* and Wordsworth's poems *Expostulation and Reply* and *The Tables Turned*.

The essay was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1877 and later included in the volume entitled *Virginibus Puerisque*, published in 1881.

The quotation at the head of the text is from *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, under the year 1769. The "all" in "but if we were all idle" was omitted by Stevenson; it has been inserted from the original Boswell text.

## PAGE 146

*Boswell. . . Johnson*: James Boswell (1740-1795) was a young admirer and biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), famous English scholar and critic and one of the most interesting talkers England has known. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, published in 1791, is universally acknowledged as the best biography written in English.

*lèse-respectability*: 'insult to respectability'. This is a coinage of Stevenson's on the analogy of the French legal term, *lèse-majesté*, meaning 'treason'.

*gasconade*: 'boasting'. The natives of Gascony in Southern France are reputed to be great boasters; hence the word.

*dogmatic. . . ruling class:* 'kinds of work recognized as genuine by those who today lay down the law in these matters'.

*the great. . . pieces:* 'the scramble for money'.

*votes for the sixpences:* 'decides that the prize is worthwhile'.

*'goes for':* 'goes all out for; throws all his energies into the task of obtaining'.

## PAGE 147

*Alexander. . . Diogenes:* When Alexander the Great (356-323 B. C.), the celebrated world-conqueror, met the eccentric Greek philosopher, Diogenes the Cynic (d. 323) at Corinth, he is reported to have introduced himself with the words, "I am Alexander the Great", and got the cold reply, "And I am Diogenes the Cynic". And when Alexander went on rather patronizingly to ask the philosopher if there was anything he could do for him, the answer he got was, "Yes, you can stand out of the sunshine". Stevenson observes that Alexander's vanity must have been wounded by this encounter; it doubtless was, at that moment, but legend has it that he so admired the independent Diogenes that he once said, "If I were not Alexander, I should wish to be Diogenes".

*What was. . . their success:* The reference is to the sacking of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B. C. • The Fathers were the elders or representatives of the nobility in the Senate, their Latin name being *patres*, meaning 'fathers'. According to some historians they sat, on this occasion, each at the entrance to his own house.

*sent to Coventry:* 'boycotted; treated as an outcast'. The origin of the phrase is obscure. According to one explanation, the phrase has its origin in the refusal of the citizens of Coventry (a town in Warwickshire, England) to allow their womenfolk to associate in any way with the

soldiers garrisoned there. If, in these circumstances, a soldier happened to be literally sent to Coventry he was naturally cut off from all social intercourse, that is, sent to Coventry figuratively as well. But according to another explanation, Coventry was the stronghold of the Parliamentary party during the Civil Wars of the 17th century, and so Royalist prisoners from neighbouring areas were sent there; hence the dislike of being sent to Coventry.

*Montenegro*: formerly one of the Balkan States, now part of Yugoslavia.

*Richmond*: some nine miles south of London and famous for its beauty spots. •

#### PAGE 148

*Lord Macaulay*: Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), English statesman, historian and man of letters, had a brilliant academic career and was noted for his extraordinary memory.

*a shot . . . locker*: The metaphor is a nautical one, a locker being a compartment for ammunition in a ship. The phrase "not a shot in the locker" thus comes to mean 'no money in one's pocket' and is here applied to those who have exhausted their intellectual resources.

*a very . . . irksome task*: See Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, under the year 1763.

*a mighty bloodless substitute for*: 'a very pale imitation of.' Here "mighty" is an adverb and goes with "bloodless", and not with "substitute".

*like the Lady of Shalott*: See Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott*. She is under a curse: she may not look out of her window towards the town of Camelot. And so she sits with her back to the window and looks at the reflection of the outer world in the mirror before her. But, the story proceeds, when the image of Sir Lancelot flashes in the mirror she rushes to the window and looks down to

Camelot; and presently she finds a boat and floats into Camelot, but dies before she gets there.

## PAGE 149

*Kinetic Stability*: the principle in dynamics that accounts for equilibrium due to motion, as of a top when it is spinning.

*Emphyteusis*. . . *a crime*: Both the terms used here are legal terms. Though the first of these sounds rather like "elephantiasis", it is not the name of a disease. Nor is the second, in spite of its resemblance to "suicide" or "homicide", a crime. "Emphyteusis" is defined as 'a perpetual right in the lease of land that is the property of another', and "Stillicide" as 'the right relating to the dropping of rain water from the eaves of a house upon another's land or roof'.

*Dickens and Balzac*: realistic novelists of the 19th century. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) author of *David Copperfield*, *The Pickwick Papers* and numerous other English novels, was the son of a government clerk and received little education. Honoré de Balzac, the French author of the collection known as *La Comédie Humaine*, was also largely self-educated.

*many inglorious masters*: The word "inglorious" here, meaning 'unknown to fame', recalls Gray's famous line in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*:

"Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest."

*burn*: a dialectal and poetic word for 'small stream'.

*Mr. Worldly Wiseman*: a character in John Bunyan's seventeenth-century allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, relating the adventures of Christian as he flees from the City of Destruction, through the Valley of Humiliation, Vanity Fair, and the like, to the Celestial City. Like Faithful, Giant Despair and Great Heart, the names of some of the

other characters in the allegory, the name Mr. Worldly Wiseman explains itself. In the dialogue that ensues Stevenson imitates the diction and style of Bunyan.

## PAGE 150

*Sloughs and Thickets:* This recalls the Slough of Despond into which Christian falls early in his pilgrimage. This "slough", pronounced so as to rhyme with "cow" and meaning 'swamp, muddy place, bog', is to be distinguished from the identically spelt word, rhyming with "cuff" and meaning 'cast-off skin of a snake'.

*by root-of-heart:* More usually today, "by rote", that is, 'by heart'. The "rote" is in origin just another form of "route"; and so, too, probably is the "root" in Stevenson's phrase, which is a deliberate reproduction of Bunyan's in such a passage as this: "That thou read therein to thy self and to thy children, until you have got it by root-of-Heart."

*scourged by the Hangman:* The duties of a hangman were those of a torturer as well as of an executioner. The burning of documents regarded as offensive was also entrusted to him.

*ruffling out his cravat:* As worn in the 17th century a cravat was a neckcloth of linen or lace tied in a bow with long flowing ends. Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who would, of course, be fashionably dressed, is here shown indignantly disturbing the nice smoothness of his finely starched cravat.

*your scholastic categories:* 'the acknowledged branches of learning'. The "your" here is an indefinite, rather contemptuous particle, meaning vaguely 'that you know of'. Cf. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, iv, 3, 24: "Your worm is your only emperor for diet; your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service". Stevenson has many instances of this; e.g., "your truant" (p. 151), "your industrious fellows"

(p. 157) and "your athletic men in purple stockings" (*Walking Tours*).

## PAGE 151

*Sainte-Beuve*: Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869) was a French critic and poet. As a critic he refused to be bound by ancient practices or dogmas and, in fact, helped to promote the Romantic movement in France.

*stockish and dyspeptic*: 'dull and depressed'. The word "stockish" literally means 'lifeless or immovable, like a stock or stump of a tree'. Shakespeare uses it in the sense of 'unfeeling in *The Merchant of Venice*, V, i, 81.

## PAGE 152

*afford some Hebrew roots*: The word "roots" here is a philological technicality, a root being the basis on which words in a language are made by adding prefixes and suffixes. Hence, What Stevenson means by the phrase is, broadly, 'part with their specialized knowledge of Hebrew philology'.

*only a . . . indulgence*: 'a detached, critical attitude to his own pet theories and hobbies.'

*the Belvedere of Commonsense*: A belvedere is a turret on top of a building from which to view the surrounding landscape.

*the East. . . Sunrise*: These words suggest the extreme of undiluted optimism or pessimism which one group or another of narrow-minded men may exhibit. The East and the Sunrise symbolize the cheerful and glittering aspects of life, the West and the Devil the ugly and the foul.

*shrill doctors*: The image called up is that of excited philosophers arguing, each at the top of his voice, about some point of belief.

*plangent wars*: Here is another instance of Stevenson's use of words to convey one meaning to the ordinary reader

and an additional one to the more knowing. For "plangent" is today commonly understood as 'loud-sounding'; but as it comes from a Latin word meaning 'to beat the breast in mourning', its appropriateness as an epithet for wars, which result in much lamentation, may also be perceived by those who know the etymology of the word.

## PAGE 153

*before the Flood.* . . . *Revolution*: 'prior to great natural and historical upheavals which for a time break the even course of human lives'. The Flood is the deluge that nearly destroyed all life on earth in the time of Noah: see *Genesis* vi-viii, where it is viewed as an expression of God's anger at the wickedness then prevailing in the world. As for the French Revolution, this was the uprising of the people against the King and the aristocracy at the end of the 18th century (1789); it ended feudalism and established the rights of the common man.

*the old.* . . . *hawthorn*: an echo of Milton's lines in *L'Allegro*:

"And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale."

## PAGE 154

*alienated*: 'insane'. The word is a euphemism meaning, literally, 'become a stranger or alien to one's senses'.

*Before he was breeched*: 'before he was old enough to wear breeches'. "To breech" is an archaic verb meaning 'to put (a child) into (its first) breeches.'

*the pipe.* . . . *empty*: figuratively, of course; a way of saying 'there is no energy or spirit left'.

## PAGE 155

*played upon the Theatre of Life*: Stevenson is here using the word "theatre" in the obsolete sense of 'stage or

platform. on which a play is acted'. Cf. Goldsmith's *Natural History*: "Like the ghost on a theatre". A couple of lines later, however, where Stevenson writes, "in that Theatre", the word has its normal sense, 'play-house'.

*walking gentlemen*: In the theatrical world this is the term applied to those playing gentlemanly parts but with little or nothing to say.

*Colonel Newcome*. . . .than Mr. Barnes: The three persons mentioned here are all from Thackeray's novel *The Newcomes* (1853-55). Colonel Thomas Newcome is a simple and honourable gentleman who ruined himself, and some of his friends as well, by investing his money, and getting them to invest theirs, in a bank that presently failed. Fred Bayham, described as "huge, handsome and jolly", is a reckless, irresponsible friend of the Newcomes; he was always dependent on the charity of others but had no malice in him and was, in fact, very kind to the Colonel when he lost his fortune. On the other hand, the Colonel's nephew, Barnes Newcome, was a mean, hard-hearted villain, a whited sepulchre, who was outwardly a perfect gentleman but was inwardly full of venom and spite.

*Falstaff*: Shakespeare's supreme comic character, Sir John Falstaff, is a coward, liar and drunkard, but his failings are more than redeemed by his wit and good humour. He is seen at his best in the two *Henry IV* plays.

*long-faced Barabbases*: 'pious humbugs'. The allusion is to the noted robber released instead of Jesus. It was the custom at the feast of the Passover for the Governor of Judaea to release a prisoner and, though the Governor, Pilate, was inclined to release Jesus, the Jewish priests and elders, who were the chief enemies of Jesus, shouted for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. See *Gospel of St. Matthew*, xxvii, 15-25.

*Hazlitt*. . . .*Northcote*: This refers to *Conversations of James Northcote* (1830) by William Hazlitt, English

essayist and critic. (See note on p. 197 above). James Northcote (1746-1831) was a portrait-painter and author.

## PAGE 156

*like a compact with the devil*: See, for example, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, where Faustus's agreement with Mephistopheles to sell his soul to the Devil in return for twenty-four years of self-indulgence is written in his blood.

*like the. . . .twice-blest*: The allusion is to Portia's famous words in *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, i, 183ff:

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,—  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

## PAGE 157

*prove the forty-seventh proposition*: the one known as the Theorem of Pythagoras in the First Book of Euclid, the great Greek mathematician of c. 300 B. C.

*absents himself. . . fellowship*: The phrase is reminiscent of Hamlet's dying words to Horatio: "Absent thee from felicity awhile" (*Hamlet*, V, ii, 346).

*carpet. . . inkpot*: The addition of these details sharpens the image of the recluse: we can the better picture him at home (in his stay-at-home slippers) and at his desk (beside his inkpot). Further, the epithet "leaden" is doubly apt: it suggests not only an inkpot made of lead but also the dull or leaden disposition of its owner.

*the Circumlocution Office*: This is the name given by Dickens in *Little Dorrit* to a government office with its incompetent and obstructive officials, who never give a straight answer to a straight inquiry and in every way shirk their responsibilities.

## PAGE 158

*pother*: 'fuss, trouble, commotion'. The word originally meant 'choking smoke or dust' and has been in use from the 17th century. Its connection with "bother", which dates from the 18th century, is uncertain, though today the two words appear to be interchangeable.

*Joan of Arc*: the Maid of Orleans, as she is called (1412-1431). She believed that she was summoned by God to save France and so, from being a peasant girl, turned soldier and led the French armies to several victories against the English. But she, at last fell into the hands of the English, who tried her for sorcery and heresy and condemned her to be burnt at the stake. See Bernard Shaw's play, *saint Joan*.

"so careless. . . .life": This is from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, lv:

"Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life".

*Shakespeare. . . .preserves*: This alludes to the widely-accepted legend that Shakespeare was persecuted by Sir Thomas Lucy (1552-1600), owner of a large estate in Warwickshire, for deer-stealing in his park. It is said that it was to escape this harassment that Shakespeare left his native Stratford and went to London.

*the proudest. . . .vanities*: namely, the love of fame. Cf. Milton's characterization of fame as "That last infirmity of noble mind" (*Lycidas*).

## PAGE 159

*Atlas. . . .nightmare*: Atlas, in classical mythology, was a Titan, brother of Prometheus. He was turned into a mountain supporting the heavens on its summit. This

was only a poetic way of suggesting that the Atlas Mountains in North Africa are so high that their summit touches the sky. Our modern atlases are so called because representations of Atlas supporting the heavens were used as frontispieces to early collections of maps.

*cross*: 'annoyance, trial, vexation'; an extension of the sense, 'affliction or trial borne with Christian patience'. See *St. Matthew*, x, 58; xvi, 24, etc.

*as though Pharaoh. . . pyramids*: 'as if their petty articles had to be written under a divine injunction or command'. Stevenson implies that there would be some justification for those engaged in producing great works of art if they took themselves very seriously, to the extent even of making a nuisance of themselves to those around them; but there can be none for petty artists engaged in petty work. The mention of Pharaoh (the title given to the ancient kings of Egypt), the Israelites, and the pyramids has been prompted by the account of the persecution of the Israelites in Egypt in the opening chapters of *Exodus*. The Israelites are there said to have been made to work "with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field". Nowhere, however, is it explicitly stated that they were made to build the pyramids—those monumental stone structures, serving as royal tombs, of which seventy have so far been discovered.

*the Master of Ceremonies*: God; for He orders and controls all things, just as the Master of the Ceremonies at a banquet or public function ensures the smooth succession of events on the occasion.

*this lukewarm bullet*: the world, which, scientists tell us, is now much less hot at the centre than it was when it first started on its independent journey through space.

*chimerical*: 'illusory, deceptive, unreal'. In Greek mythology a chimera was a fabulous monster, partly lion, partly goat, and partly serpent.

VII  
EL DORADO

This essay was first published in 1875 and was reprinted in *Virginibus Puerisque*, published in 1881. *El Dorado* is a Spanish phrase meaning, literally, 'the gilded one', and was the name given by the 16th-century Spanish explorers to a region reported to exist in northern South America and to abound in gold. The name is used by Stevenson to symbolize whatever is a distant, unattainable goal or ideal, the point of the essay being that real happiness consists not in achievement, but in hope and aspiration and endeavour.

## PAGE 160

*our hopes. . . of life* : Cf. Pope's famous couplet:

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast;  
Man never is, but always to be, blest."

(*Essay on Man*, I, 95-6)

## PAGE 161

*enchanted colours* : Here "enchanted" means 'magical'.

*Thomas Carlyle* : Victorian essayist and historian (1795-1881) whose best-known works include *History of the French Revolution*, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, and the *History of Frederick the Great* referred to in the text. This last-named work occupied him for fourteen years and is perhaps the most entertaining of his writings.

## PAGE 162

*Alexander* : See note on p. 221 above.

*And when Gibbon. . . labours* : The reference is to the entry made in his *Autobiography* by Edward Gibbon (1737-94) after he had completed his monumental *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, on which he

had worked for over twenty years. He there records that his temporary joy over finishing his great work soon gave place to the melancholy thought that he "had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion."

*Interests. . . .mustard.* Perhaps Stevenson mentions mustard seed rather than any other seed because there is something in common between the keenness of desire and the pungency of mustard. Compare the common phrase, "keen as mustard". There may, however, also be a reference to *St. Matthew*, xiii, 31: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs and cometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

#### PAGE 163

*'Of making. . . .Preacher:* The reference is to the *Book of Ecclesiastes* or *The Preacher*, in the Old Testament: "And, furthermore, my son, be admonished. Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (xii, 12).

*Chimaeras:* See note on *chimerical* on page 230 above.

### VIII

#### A PLEA FOR GAS LAMPS

This is one of the more playful of Stevenson's essays. And yet, while it starts light-heartedly enough, it strikes a more serious note towards the end. The flippancy is largely conveyed by a comically stilted style, constant circumlocutions and a somewhat archaic diction. Humour and pathos are deftly mingled in this swift survey of municipal lighting, from the era of the hand-lantern, through that of

the oil-lamp, to that of the gas-lamp and into the dawning era of electricity.

## PAGE 165

*burgess-warren*: The word is playfully used for a city. It is coined on the analogy of "rabbit-warren", an area where rabbits abound.

*cresset*: metal vessel for holding oil for a light and usually mounted on a pole.

*lanthorn*: This variant of "lantern" is the result of a popular attempt to associate the word with the horn that was formerly used in it instead of glass. Except in spelling, accordingly, it is identical with "lantern".

*vagabond Pharos*: 'portable lighthouse'. "Pharos" is here a synonym for 'lighthouse', because at Pharos, an island in the Bay of Alexandria, was a tower of white marble, (reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world), on top of which fires were kept burning to guide ships in the bay.

*curfew being struck*: When houses were made of timber it was necessary to cover all home-fires for the night. The curfew bell at sunset was the signal for this in every hamlet, the word "curfew" being from the Old French for 'cover fire'. The curfew, as a restriction against moving out at certain hours, is a very recent development.

## PAGE 166

*clomb*: archaic past tense of the verb "climb". Such archaisms are particularly noticeable in this essay, though they are a feature of Stevenson's style generally.

*occult from guidance*: 'denied guidance'. Here "occult" is the past participle (more usually "occulted") of the verb "to occult", meaning 'to hide, conceal, cut off from view by interposing another body.' It is interesting to note that Stevenson, who came of a family of lighthouse builders, would have frequently heard of the occulting light of a

lighthouse, that is, one that is cut off for a few seconds at regular intervals.

*sorribly. . . kennels*: 'finding themselves miserably plunged in, and making their way through, the street-gutters. The word "kennel", of which an earlier form was "cannel", means 'gutter, drain'; it is related to "channel" and has nothing to do with "kennel", meaning 'dog-house.'

#### PAGE 167

*The work of Prometheus*: The allusion is to the Greek legend that Prometheus stole fire from heaven for the benefit of mankind. The story of his punishment is the theme of Aeschylus' drama, *Prometheus Bound*; he was chained to a rock on Mt. Caucasus, where his liver was consumed by an eagle in the day and restored every night, so that his torture was never-ending.

*Jupiter*: the planet of that name, and not the classical god identified with the Greek Zeus.

*the benediction. . . words*: because to use the words "God bless" in this context is almost a breach of the Second Commandment, which runs "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (*Exodus* xx, 7).

#### PAGE 168

*the little bull's eye*: The name "bull's eye" is commonly applied to a type of lantern because of the shape and look of its lens. See Stevenson's essay, *The Lantern Bearers*.

*his labours. . . apotheosis*: 'his duties are nearing their end'. From meaning 'deification, transformation into a god', the word "apotheosis" is sometimes loosely applied to 'departure or release from earthly life'; hence, here, 'termination, close'.

*A sedate electrician*: The epithet "sedate" here suggests not merely 'calm, tranquil', its normal modern sense, but also 'seated', its original meaning.

*from the Alexandra . . . Palace* : 'from North to South London'. Both these palaces were constructed originally for holding exhibitions in: the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Alexandra Palace in 1873. The Crystal Palace was originally situated at Hyde Park in the centre of London but was removed three years later to Sydenham in South East London.

*Fiat Lux* : 'Let there be light!' The allusion is to the Latin version of the words in the first book of the Bible: "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." (*Genesis*, 1, 3).

*Hampstead Hill* : in North Western London; it commands a good view of the city.

*flashes . . . hieroglyph* : 'appears to the eye as a bright but strange shape'. The reference is to the quaintness of a hieroglyph or symbol used in ancient Egyptian writing. The outline of London would appear as quaint as a hieroglyph.

*when, to borrow . . . into song* : Stevenson makes this apology because he has made a playful adaptation of the biblical verse: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (*Book of Job*, xxxviii, 7).

*Pall Mall* : a street in the West End of London, housing several of London's best-known clubs. The name is today most commonly pronounced as though it were spelt "pell mell".

#### PAGE 169

*To . . . Thirlmere* : 'to those lovers of the artistic who have been worrying or perplexed about the developments at Thirlmere'. Thirlmere, a four mile long lake in the beautiful Lake District, or Wordsworth country, was in danger of being spoilt by being used as a reservoir for the Manchester Corporation Waterworks; hence the anxiety of

lovers of beauty. But, Stevenson adds, they will find some consolation in the thought that, while Thirlmere is in danger of losing its beauty, drab cities like London are having a touch of beauty and romance imparted to them by electric lighting.

*slow progress*: Cf. the Latin motto, *festina lente*, 'hasten slowly.'

*the 'Figaro' office*: The Parisian journal *Figaro* is named after the ingenious and versatile rascal who is the barber in *The Barber of Seville* and the valet in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

*Mankind. . . of the storm*: The allusion is to Benjamin Franklin's experiments to demonstrate that lightning was a discharge of electricity. He used a kite-like device for the purpose.

*the levin brand*: 'electric lighting'; literally 'lightning-torch', "levin" being a poetic word for 'lightning', and "brand" for 'torch'.

*the Terror that Flieth*: The phrase stands for 'lightning' and connotes electric lighting. It is an echo of the biblical verse: "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night nor for the arrow that flieth by day." (*Psalm*, xci, 5).

#### PAGE 170

*a backshop. . . regions*: A backshop is a private shop behind the main one, serving as a secret place of business. It is thus suggested that those who manage the *Figaro* are the Devil's agents.

### IX

#### AES TRIPLEX

This essay, reprinted here from the volume *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), is a vigorous and delightful ex-

pression of Stevenson's philosophy of life—a philosophy which commends courage and fearlessness in the face of danger. The Latin title means 'Triple Brass' and is from Horace's ode, *To a Ship Bearing Virgil Overseas*. An English version of Horace's Latin reads:

"Him, heart of oak and brass thrice-knit  
The breast encased, who 'gainst the cruel deep  
His fragile bark first dared to pit."

## PAGE 171

*Thug*: a member of a gang of religious fanatics in Northern and Central India who strangled and robbed travellers in honour of the goddess Kali. Thuggery was suppressed about the year 1825.

*the pyramids of Egypt*: See note on page 230 above.

*the gibbets. . . Europe*: A dule tree (from "dole" meaning 'sorrow, distress') was a gibbet or an upright post with an extended arm, from which the bodies of criminals were hung in chains after execution as a grim warning to all who beheld them.

## PAGE 172

*cities in. . . fiery mountains*: Many of the peaks of the South American mountain range known as the Andes are active volcanoes.

*tremendous. . . neighbourhood*: another instance of Stevenson's use of words with two layers of meaning. For "tremendous", of course, ordinarily stands for 'awful, fearful'; but here Stevenson has also its literal sense in mind, namely 'trembling, quivering'.

*living ruin. . . sky-high*: The lava ejected by a volcanic eruption is referred to as "living ruin" because it is an active fiery agent of ruin, destroying everything on which it descends.

## PAGE 173

*a bagful of petards*: The word "petard", here used for a 'cracker, squib', is immortalized in the Shakespearean phrase, "hoist with his own petard" (*Hamlet*, III, iv), meaning 'blown up with his own bomb'.

*the blue-peter. . . truck*: When a ship is about to leave harbour a blue flag with a white square, popularly known as a Blue Peter, is hoisted on to the truck or wooden disk at the top of the mast.

## PAGE 174

*the valley of Balaklava*: The allusion here is to the famous Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854 during the Crimean War. The village of Balaklava on the Black Sea was the scene of this disastrous charge by the British troops against the Russians, the attackers losing more than half their men. See Tennyson's poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

*Curtius*: Mettius Curtius, a patriotic and fearless Roman. In 362 B.C. he leapt into the chasm which had appeared in the Roman forum and which, according to the soothsayers, could only be filled if Rome's greatest treasure were thrown into it. For, as he said before he plunged, mounted on horseback, into the chasm, Rome could have no greater treasure than a brave citizen. Legend has it that the chasm immediately closed over his dead body.

## PAGE 175

*the valley. . . Death*: Another reference to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. (See note on *Mr. Worldly Wiseman* on p. 223 above). This is one of the regions—like the Valley of Humiliation and Vanity Fair—through which Christian had to pass on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City. This picturesque term for a state of the utmost despondency and fear is doubtless to be traced back to *Psalms*, xxiii, 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of death."

*like a party for the Derby*: that is, happy and care-free. The horse-race known as the Derby is the most popular event of the racing-season in England; it is generally run at Epsom on the last Wednesday in May, or the first in June.

*the deified Caligula* The Roman Emperor Caligula (murdered in 41 A.D.) was both mad and cruel. He erected a temple to himself as though he was a god, appointed his horse a Consul and exhibited other such eccentricities. The one detailed in the text exhibits his cruelty as well.

*bridge over Baiae bay*: Baiae was a town, celebrated for its baths, on the Bay of Naples. Caligula had a bridge of boats built to connect it with Puteoli, three miles away across the bay.

*Praetorian guards*: the imperial body-guard. Originally they were a select body of men attending on the person of the *praetor* or general of the army.

*God's pale Praetorian*: i.e., death.

PAGE 176

*hold the sheet. . . fast*: The sheet is the rope or chain at the lower corner of a sail with which the tension of the sail is regulated. Hence it must be held by the yachtsman and not tied down.

*martinet*: 'a stickler for correctness or precision; a strict disciplinarian.' The word goes back to General Martinet, a French drill-master of the reign of Louis XIV.

*Job*: The *Book of Job*, one of the most poetic in the Bible, tells of Job, a God-fearing man suddenly overtaken by misfortunes, and of the poor comfort he derived from those who came to comfort him.

*Omar Khayam*: The reference is to the Rubaiyats of the Persian poet of the eleventh century, Omar Khayam or

Omar the Tentmaker. Stevenson is doubtless thinking of Edward Fitzgerald's English translation of the work, first published in 1852.

*Thomas Carlyle*: See note on p. 231 above.

*Walt Whitman*: American poet (1819-92) whose *Leaves of Grass* and other works are marked by great intellectual independence and artistic unconventionality. Stevenson acknowledges his indebtedness to Whitman in his essay *Books Which Have Influenced Me*.

*made out. . . . dream*: Cf. Shakespeare's famous lines:

"We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep."

(*The Tempest*, V. i. 155ff)

#### PAGE 178

*tearing divines*: Cf. "shrill doctors" in *An Apology for Idlers* and see the note on the phrase on p. 225 above.

*Death. . . . Commander's statue*: The Commander was the Governor of Seville whose daughter Don Juan had seduced and whom he had killed in a duel. And the story goes that Don Juan, passing through the vault, where a statue was erected over the dead Commander's tomb, jestingly invited the statue to a banquet. To his utter amazement it came and seated itself at the table; and then, compelling Don Juan to follow it, it seized him and delivered him to the devils. Don Juan is the traditional heartless seducer and figures in Spanish, French and English drama and poetry.

*Passing bells*: A passing bell is a bell formerly rung at a person's death to obtain prayers for the passing soul. Now, more usually it is a bell rung immediately after a person's death in order to announce it.

*a mere. . . . say*: Stevenson is here referring to the

French *cul-de-sac*, which literally means 'the end of a sack or bag' and stands for what is called 'a blind alley' in English: a passage open at one end only.

## PAGE 179

*our respected lexicographer*: Dr. Samuel Johnson, who prepared the first real English Dictionary, in 1755. His fear of death is frequently referred to in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, but what he feared was not dying but the consequences of death, the after-life.

*Already... Highland tour*: At the age of 64, Johnson, accompanied by Boswell, toured Scotland and the Hebrides for over two months. This tour is recorded in Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* and Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands*.

## PAGE 181

*A peerage... Nelson*: Horatio Nelson (1758-1805), Britain's greatest naval hero, inflicted many heavy defeats on Napoleon's fleet. The heaviest was at the Battle of Trafalgar, during which he himself was fatally wounded and died in the hour of victory. For the utterance referred to, see Southey's *Life of Nelson*, chapter 5. The occasion was the eve of the Battle of the Nile, fought with Napoleon's fleet in 1798. By "Westminster Abbey" he, of course, meant a glorious death, such as would earn him burial, like other national heroes, in Westminster Abbey. ✓

*Think of... the end*: Johnson published the *Plan* of his *Dictionary* in 1747 but the *Dictionary* itself did not come out till 1755. As Boswell remarks: "The world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies."

*Thackeray... mid-course*: The reference is to Thackeray's unfinished novel, *Denis Duval*, published posthumously in 1864, and to Dickens's unfinished novel, *The*

*Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which he had begun the very year he died.

## PAGE 182

*When the Greeks. . . die young*: This familiar saying first appears in a writing of the Greek dramatist, Menander (342-291 B.C.). It was caught up by the Roman comic poet, Plautus (254-184 B.C.), and is cited by Byron in *Don Juan*: "'Whom the gods love die young' was said of yore".

## PAGE 183

*trailing. . . glory*: Cf. Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*:

"But trailing clouds of glory, do we come  
From God who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

## X

## A CHRISTMAS SERMON

This is the last of twelve essays contributed by Stevenson to *Scribener's Magazine* during 1888. It is a fine expression of his philosophy of life. In it he makes it plain that it is a mistake to expect too much from ourselves or life, and yet we are to go through life with a smiling face. He believes in the duty of happiness but not in the happiness of, or arising from, duty done. In other words, he emphasizes the duty or moral obligation of being, or at least seeming, happy in order to make others happy, but warns us against expecting to be rewarded with happiness for doing our duty or being virtuous.

## PAGE 184

*Valedictory. . . rare*: 'It is seldom that one can bid farewell in the right or most appropriate words.'

*Charles Second*: King of England from 1660 to his death in 1685. He is sometimes referred to as the Merry Monarch.

*an unconscionable. . . time a-dying*: 'taking an unreasonably long time to die'.

## PAGE 185

*a tale in Tacitus*: The reference is to the *Annals* of the Roman historian, Tacitus (c. 55-120 A.D.).

*Germanicus*: grandson of Mark Antony and father of the emperor Caligula. He earned the title of Germanicus by his successful campaigns against the Germanic tribes.

*Sunt lacrymae rerum*: This is part of a famous line by the Roman poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.): "*Sunt lacrymae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt*", meaning 'There are tears for human affairs, and mortals' sorrows touch the heart', or—in Matthew Arnold's words—'The sense of tears in mortal things.'

*this was. . . Simeon*: The allusion is to the *Gospel of St. Luke*, ii, 25-32. Simeon was a devout old man of Jerusalem to whom it had been revealed that he would not die till he had seen Jesus. So, when he had seen the infant Jesus, he took up the child in his arms and blessed God and said: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.' Stevenson draws a parallel between this cry for release and the clamour of the veterans to be sent home.

*who know. . . do*: an echo of Christ's prayer on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (*St. Luke*, xxiii, 34).

*To ask. . . greed of hire*: Those who appear to be selflessly devoted to their work and to be interested only in seeing that some good comes of their unselfish service are, says Stevenson, really seeking a reward for their deeds, notwithstanding all their lofty pretensions. Throughout his

writings Stevenson maintains that duty must be done for its own sake, and not in the hope of a reward.

## PAGE 186

*Christ would. . . shalt not*: Thus, for the negative commandment, "Thou shalt not kill"—one of the Ten Commandments (see *Exodus*, xx, 13)—Christ substituted "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". (*St. Matthew*, xix, 19 and xxii, 36-40).

*the Fox. . . tail*: The allusion is to one of Aesop's fables—the one in which a fox, having lost its tail in a trap, seeks to persuade other foxes to cut off theirs.

## PAGE 187

*lie all. . . side*: 'begin only when we have overcome our weaknesses'. In other words, overcoming our weaknesses is no more than a preparation for doing our duty.

*preliminary. . . decks*: 'getting ready for action'. The metaphor is a naval one, the decks of a ship being cleared for the guns to go into action against the enemy.

*a total abstainer*: a teetotaller, one who does not take liquor.

*a mortified appetite*: 'a craving that has been conquered or suppressed'.

*springs. . . dullness*: 'arises from an inability to appreciate the value of the ordinary duties of life.'

*We require. . . an appetite*: All this is said ironically; what Stevenson wishes to convey is rather that these seemingly petty duties are not as petty or unheroic as some people imagine.

*no cutting the Gordian knots*: The allusion is to Alexander's impatiently cutting the Gordian knot instead of troubling to untie it. This knot was so called because it was tied by a Phrygian peasant, Gordius. When he was

chosen king, he dedicated his waggon to Zeus, securing the pole to the yoke with so firm a knot that the oracle later declared that whoever could untie the knot would reign over all Asia.

## PAGE 188

*the continent. . . well*: Here the epithet "continent" means 'all-inclusive,' the idea being that the art of living contains or includes every other art.

*only self-deception. . . despairer*: What Stevenson means is that it may be satisfying to hug the illusion that one is destined to succeed, but in the long run it will be the man who reconciles himself to the thought that he is doomed to failure who will be really happy.

*condemned. . . face*: This is an emphatic way of saying that we must appear to be cheerful even if we are not really cheerful at heart.

*It is one. . . without*: Cf. *St. Matthew*, xviii, 8: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire."

## PAGE 189

*the kingdom. . . childlike*: Cf. *St. Matthew*, xix, 14: "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

*carpet interests*: 'petty, commonplace activities'. The suggestion is of things that do not go beyond the comfortable boundaries of the boudoir or drawing-room. The word "carpet" is frequently used disparagingly to suggest effeminacy, dilettantism or shirking of practical work, difficulty or danger; thus, "carpet-knight", "carpet consideration". Stevenson's phrase "twopenny concerns" emphasizes the sense of pettiness or worthlessness.

*Pharisee*: a member of an ancient Jewish sect that prided itself on its strict observance of the religious law and its superior piety. The name is now frequently applied to one who is self-righteous or hypocritical.

*could not away with*: 'could not get on with or tolerate.' See, for example, *St. Matthew*, xxiii, 13-33.

## PAGE 190

*the Reverend Mr. Zola*: Emile Zola (1840-1902) was a French novelist who sought to depict vice and crime and the baser side of human life as minutely and realistically as possible. It is because of the strong moral and reformatory purpose of some of his works that Stevenson satirically affixes "Reverend" to his name.

*the hobgoblin old lady*: the children's bogey woman who would not let them play with dolls.

*stand buffet*: an unusual phrase, which possibly means 'suffer knocks'. (A buffet is a blow or stroke.)

## PAGE 191

*capitis diminutio*: a term in Roman law meaning 'loss of civil rights'. There were different degrees of this, ranging from complete loss of freedom and, with it, all rights of citizenship, to the mere loss of family rights. Hence Stevenson regards a social boycott as but a minor loss of civil rights.

*ostracism*: Here the word is equivalent to 'boycott' or 'excommunication'. In ancient Greece ostracism was a mode of judgment by which a person deemed dangerous to the State was banished for a certain period. It was so called because each citizen wrote on a potsherd or *ostrakon* the name of the person whom he wanted banished.

## PAGE 191

*his brother's keeper*: 'responsible for his neighbour'.

The phrase is an echo of Cain's reply, "Am I my brother's keeper?" when God asked him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (*Genesis*, iv, 9.)

*prophet. . . morality*: Here "prophet" means 'advocate, champion'.

*Christ's sayings. . . each other*: Perhaps Stevenson is here referring to such utterances of Christ as are recorded in *St. Matthew*, xviii, 15-17 and xxi, 12, 13.

## PAGE 192

*it is. . . our cloak*: See *St. Matthew*, v, 38-40: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

*Revenge. . . justice*: These are the opening words of Bacon's essay, *Of Revenge*.

*Ill-temper. . . lusts*: In these condemnations we give free and seemingly justifiable play to our own evil passions, such as ill-temper, envy and revenge; under the cloak of a just indignation against vice, we give expression to the evil that is within ourselves.

## PAGE 193

*no abiding city*: 'not a permanent home'. Cf. Chaucer, "Here is none home; here is but wilderness" (*Truth*).

*Paul or Marcus Aurelius*: St. Paul carried the gospel of Christ over all Asia Minor and into Greece. He was executed by Nero in A.D. 64. Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.) was a philosopher besides being a Roman Emperor. He is famous for his *Meditations*, a deeply religious book,

which emphasizes the brotherhood of man and the need for courage and patience in bearing the ills of life.

## PAGE 194

*Give him. . . bones*: 'honour him with a military funeral'. Cf. Fortinbras's words at the end of *Hamlet*:

"Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;  
.....and, for his passage,  
The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
Speak loudly for him."



